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# PHOTOGRAPHS: MICHEL FIGUET; PHEDON PAPAMICHAEL; MING TANG-EVANS; PABLO VICENS

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#### APRIL 2015







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She's a fan.



#### EDITOR'S LETTER



GAVE MY LITTLE ONE AN ANT FARM FOR CHRISTMAS. Weirdly, the ants come separately from the farm. You have to send off for them. Then, even more weirdly, after the ants arrive in the post, you have to put them in the fridge for 10 minutes. To calm them down after the excitement of their journey.

The ants. They've been fascinating. We've all been mesmerised. Each morning as we've sat there eating Weetabix, staring at them with a magnifying glass, at the tunnels they've created and the food experiments we've done, my daughter would ask me to tell her more about them. 'All worker ants are female,' I would say. 'Fighter ants can reduce a tethered horse to bones within a day.'

We don't take bugs lightly in our household. My sister says she is convinced the only reason she got into Cambridge was that her interviewer was dozing off until she suddenly decided to rant on about termites for 20 minutes. It really perked him up, she said. My daughter Willow's first love is woodlice, but it turns out you can't get a woodlice farm. She's absolutely mad about them. And spiders. She's a tiny bit scared

of spiders but it didn't stop her from capturing one and putting it in a plastic container, and then feeding it other smaller bugs she rummaged around in the garden for.

Walking in the countryside recently, we found a worm that – I'm not joking – was five-foot long. My seven-year-old hooked it on a stick and swung it around in our faces. No one found that funny. There was something properly wrong with that worm.

Coming back from an island holiday once we were just putting our bags through the X-ray machine when I noticed Willow's rucksack was wriggling and prickling. I looked inside to find the whole bag crawling with hermit crabs she'd collected from the beach. Another time, in Wyoming, she started a cricket hospital, finding hundreds and thousands of crickets that she stored under a big rock. I'm not sure, actually, that hospital was the right word for it.

Anyway, after about six months of to-ing and fro-ing with estate agents and accountants I found out yesterday we've lost out on a house I fell in love with. I walked into that house and immediately visualised the next part of my life there, with the children blossoming and blooming and me watching them growing into young women. It had a dilapidated shed at the bottom of the garden where I imagined all sorts of wonderful things happening as we all got older, books being written, declarations of love, epiphanies dark and small but also epic and star-bright. It was an arms-wide-open house. It felt as if a literal and metaphorical door had opened.

'The real problem now,' my husband said last night, 'is that in the meantime you've fallen out of love with this house.' I didn't realise he was right until he said it. Mine is a clippy-cloppy-uppy-downy house. And how I used to adore it! Photographing corners of it with my Polaroid camera that I've kept in old shoe boxes. But they always say you can only be in love with one thing at a time, and my house has suffered in the love triangle.

There's definitely something wrong with the ants. Their favourite food has always been apple, and the bits of apple have been there for about two days now, just sitting there on top of the sand, with no movement around them. I feel preternaturally sad. What kind of a woman can't look after ants?

This is the new issue of Condé Nast Traveller. For those who know that, if not today, and maybe not even tomorrow, the time will come to move on.

#### Melinda Stevens Editor





#### THE READERS' TRAVEL AWARDS 2015 VOTE ONLINE FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A HOLIDAY IN MARRAKECH WWW.CNTRAVELLER.COM/RTA

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THE RAINBOW BUTTERFLY

#### GRAFF

THE MOST FABULOUS JEWELS IN THE WORLD





Bill Phelps Photographer, Irish Castles (p126)

'Although my mother was fairly well-travelled, we did not travel as a family. Now that I'm a father – my daughter Hazel will be four years old soon – I'm definitely making plans for us. **Tanzania** is possibly the most beautiful place I have ever been; I find it difficult to describe, and would love to hear her tell me what it feels like.' *Bill is a photographer and director who also owns a café in Brooklyn* 





Harriet O'Brien Writer, Waterford (p28)

'My most memorable family trip was trekking in **Sikkim**. Of course, the Himalayan scenery is staggeringly beautiful but it's the Sikkimese people who make things so special. After one day's walk, we all played football with villagers at fairly high altitude.' *Harriet is a journalist and author who lives in the Cotswolds* 





Stanley Stewart Writer, Guatemala (p144)

'Staying in Irish castles with my seven-year-old daughter was a joy – lots of opportunity for play-acting – but the **Scottish Highlands** are always fun because visits become a series of games: archery, canoeing, camping, fly-fishing and general larking about.' *Stanley's career has taken him along the Silk Road and to Kilimanjaro's summit* 





Squire Fox *Photographer*, Austin (p116)
'My family enjoys the endless freedom of the **California** 

**Desert**. We are water people, so it's a departure from waves to the quiet, rugged, dry landscape. We always have to stop at Joshua Tree, then our favourite hotel, Parker Palms Springs.' Squire is a keen surfer who commutes between New York City and Charleston, South Carolina





David Crookes Photographer, Guatemala (p144) 'Ile de Ré, off the French coast. It's a wonderful place to sun hunt. You spend your time riding bikes, wearing stripes and pottering around the markets. It is incredibly beautiful: the simple life, and the way all holidays should

stripes and pottering around the markets. It is incredibly beautiful: the simple life, and the way all holidays should be remembered.' Cape Town-based David has travelled from Ethiopia to Sri Lanka for this magazine





Nonie Niesewand Writer, Hong Kong (p136) 'Every summer I go beachcombing and rock climbing at

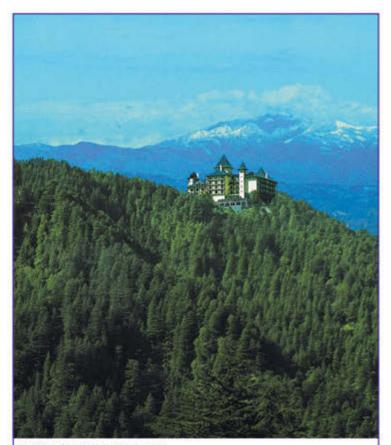
**Constantine Bay** in North Cornwall. I love the sweeping beaches, dazzling skies, tidal rock pools and the salty frizz of the Atlantic breakers. My sons learned to surf there.' *As a contributing editor of 'Surface NY', Nonie visits international art fairs including Art Basel, Design Miami, Frieze and the Venice Biennale* 





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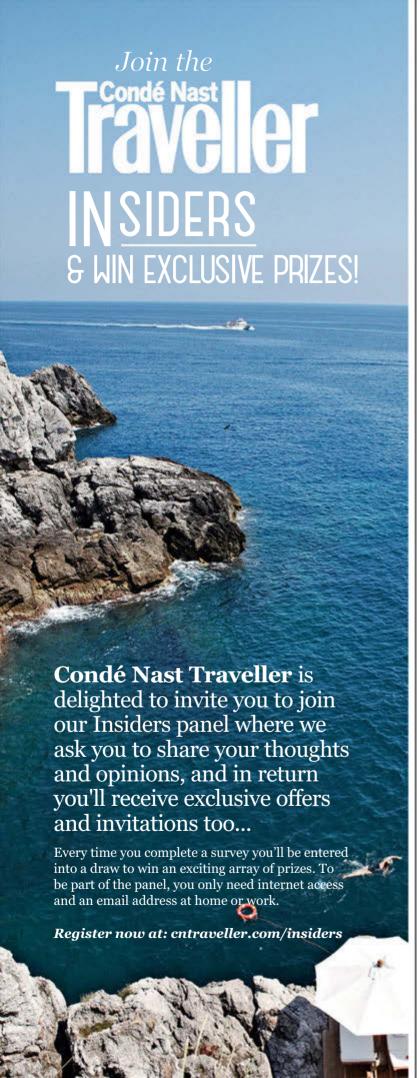
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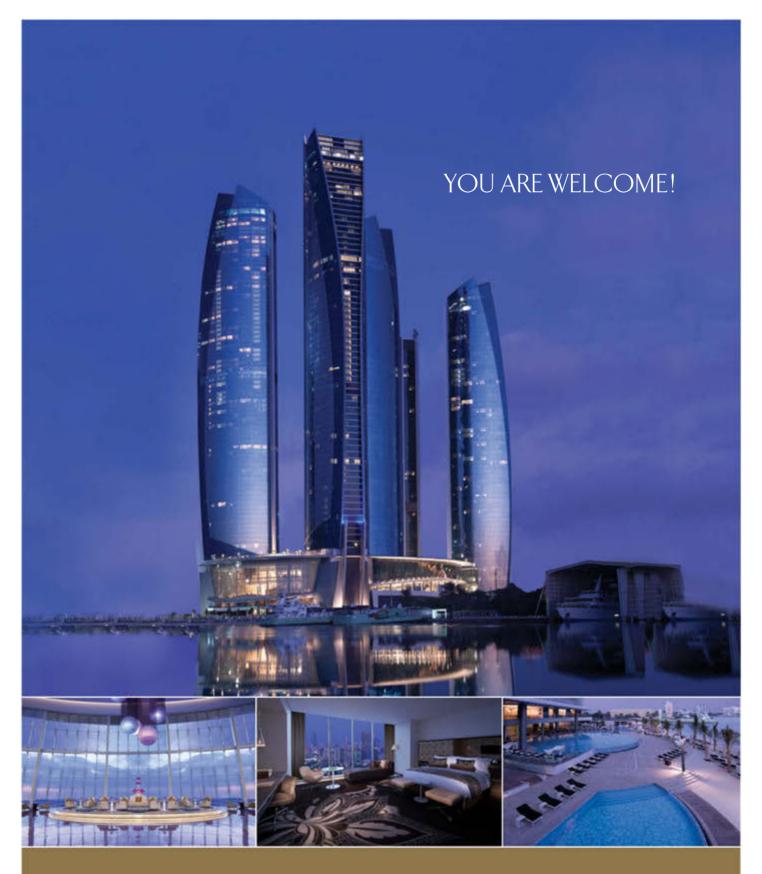
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## WORD OF MOUTH SHOOT 'EM UP

#### **◆THE TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER**

Alistair Taylor-Young has photographed for Condé Nast Traveller since it launched − everywhere from Salta to Namibia. @alistair\_t\_y ★ Take many pictures of the same subject, but move your phone or yourself each time, and vary the exposure (experiment by tapping different places on the screen). Create a selection to edit, post or delete later − there's always a best one.

★ For action shots, anticipate the moment. The iPhone6 has a fantastic burst feature, which takes multiple images while the action is happening, so you can choose your favourite.

★ Try not to zoom in with the iPhone: it is a slightly wide-angle lens, not a telephoto.

#### HIP TO BE SOUARE

Paris's Pompidou Centre sprouts a Spanish offshoot in the seaside city of Málaga this month. A surprising location? We don't think so

#### WHY MALAGA OF ALL PLACES?

Often overlooked as merely the airport gateway to the Costa del Sol or a magnet for retirees and on-the-run conmen, Málaga has serious art credentials. The Picasso (the artist was born here), Carmen Thyssen and Contemporary Art (CAC) museums are world-class, and quirky stuff such as CAC director Fernando Frances's SoHo, a once uninspiring neighbourhood turned stage for street art. add a new cool.

#### SO THIS NEW GALLERY THEN...

It's an immense glass cube on the sleek dockside, and billed as a cultural laboratory. It will share collections with Paris (modern greats such as Kahlo, Bacon, Ernst, Magritte), combined with one-offs including a Dadaist cinema exhibition.

#### ANY OTHER SURPRISES?

Málaga is now the culinary heart of the Costa del Sol. Local ingredients are given a fresh edge at one Michelin-starred JCG; La Cosmopolita dishes up authentic local flavours such as *antojo* (eggs, potatoes and ham) and buttery white beans with clams, and experimental tapas at La Cocina also wow. But the Andaluz-Japanese-South American dishes at Óleo are worth the trip alone – try the Vietnamese roll with wild mountain kid goat or sushi rolls with butterfish and truffles.

#### I'M THERE, WHERE DO I STAY?

Deco-inspired Room Mate Lola is pastelhued romantic while Molina Lario has a rooftop pool with a view. TARA STEVENS



#### THE FOOD SNAPPER

Improve your Instagram travel

shots with tips from the pros

David Loftus has photographed more than 100 recipe books for chefs including Jamie Oliver,
April Bloomfield and Rachel Khoo.
@davidloftus

- ★ Always shoot in daylight you only need a tiny pool of light - and turn your flash off. Not only does it annoy people in restaurants, but it gives horrid harsh shadows.
- ★ Avoid over-saturating food with filters and making it look unreal.
- ★ A napkin or some tinfoil can make a great reflector next to a window or block out unwanted fake lights overhead.



#### ■ THE CINEMATOGRAPHER Phedon Panamichael was nominated for a

Phedon Papamichael was nominated for an Oscar for Nebraska, and other credits include The Ides of March and The Descendants. @papa2

★ Break the rules of conventional composition − I rarely centre things. I like to give space and contrast the scale around a subject to offset it. It makes the eye go to it, but also shows that item's context and relationship to its surroundings.

- ★ Experiment with the tilt shift and vignette tools to draw the eye in and put more emphasis on what you want to feature.
- ★ Don't be afraid of black and white. Sunsets and golden light get more likes, but the highcontrast Inkwell filter is one of my favourites.

#### THE STREET STYLE STAR

**Scott Schuman** launched The Sartorialist in 2005 and since then has captured stylish folk around the globe. He also shoots for *GQ*, *Vogue* and Burberry. *@thesartorialist* 

- ★ I use Instagram's tools (the little spanner symbol) rather than filters to edit – brighten, play with the saturation. Sharpness is useful if you don't hold the phone perfectly steady.
- ★ Photographing people at night, the phone's flash is so strong that it blows out everyone. So in tools, take the saturation right down and then play with the contrast until it looks good.
- ★ Most people aren't models, so it's better if you don't ask them to pose. Let them do what they are going to do and react to that.



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She's in fashion: art-house star and trendsetter Chloë Sevigny has come to define hipster New York

## SOWNTOWN GIRL

In 1994 the *New Yorker* called Chloë Sevigny 'the coolest girl in the world'. Two decades later, the actress, model and designer is still New York's indie queen, and a new book celebrates her style. Here she shares her NYC fashion hits

Fort Greene Flea, Brooklyn

I picked up a Cacharel
sweater for my boyfriend and a Saint Laurent top for myself
here recently. As well as vintage stalls, the market has all
sorts of food, like kale pizzas and Korean street food. I only
moved to Brooklyn from Manhattan a few months ago, but
already I'm that asshole who buys \$25 artisanal kimchi.

Resurrection, Mott Street
When I've got an event, this is
my first stop. Last time I bought a mini skirt by Comme des
Garcons with tiered ruffles – so much fun to dance in.

Kentshire, Madison Avenue
vintage and designer jewellery, from elegant fine jewels to
wild 1970s pieces. I wore a pearl and diamond bowtie
brooch from here on a black lace Alexander McQueen
dress to the Met Gala in 2011, but I also find a lot of my

The V Files, Mercer Street
This young collective were the first in the city to sell Hood By Air, and they did a really cool collaboration with Kathleen Hanna from Bikini Kill. Look at their social media and blog: they've got streetwear covered.

Search & Destroy, Saint Marks Place
This vintage store is affordable and a bit punky with loads of funky little finds. If I suddenly feel like a wool kilt, I'll find one here. The music is loud, so if punk isn't your thing, wear earphones.

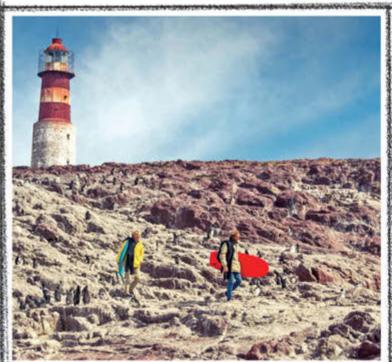
Comme des Garcons, West 22nd Street
I've been

everyday favourites.

wearing Comme des Garcons Rose ever since it came out, and I'll still buy it from the Chelsea store. It's like walking into a museum; a work of art. Rei Kawakubu just exists on a completely different plain to the rest of us. ANNA HART Chloë Sevigny (Rizzoli New York, £19.95) is out this month

#### **GIVE US A WAVE**

Buenos Aires is better known for steak than surf, but for Argentine siblings Julián and Joaquín Azulay, it's all about the waves. Nicknamed Gauchos del Mar (sea cowboys), the brothers have surf in their DNA: their father pioneered the sport in 1960s Argentina, and their childhood summers were spent catching waves in Brazil. In March 2010, the brothers packed up a truck and set off to surf the Pacific coast from Los Angeles to Chile, filming their experiences on a handycam and a GoPro. They travelled for 403 days across 13 countries, surfing new waves on isolated beaches along the way. The final cut, Gauchos del Mar (released in 2012), won a clutch of prizes at international film festivals. The brothers' tiny \$1,500 budget meant they couldn't afford to reach Patagonia on that first trip, so in 2014 they embarked on a second film, Tierra de Patagones, in which they aim to become the first people to surf the Atlantic's remote Staten Island. The boys' next project is Africa, on a 12-month adventure starting later this year. Kicking off in Morocco, the plan is to surf from the west around the Cape and up the Indian Ocean coast. So keep an eye out for their distinctive blond manes at Senegal's N'gor beach, carving its perfect right-hander perhaps, or riding the world-class left tube at Nambia's Skeleton Bay. SORREL MOSELEY-WILLIAMS www.gauchosdelmar.com



PHOTOGRAPHS. LIZZI BOUGATSOS, ALEX AND LEJA KRESS; GLYNNIS MCDARIS, STARTRAKS

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#### **WORD OF MOUTH**



#### WEIRDLY FAMILIAR

This month marks the 25th anniversary of David Lynch's cult thriller Twin Peaks, which will be back with a new series next year. Here's how to get a taste of its skewed universe and eerily beautiful locations in the mean time.

'A SLICE OF CHERRY PIE' The Double-R Diner was played by Twede's Café in North Bend, Washington, where cherry pie is £3 a slice. Websites such as Welcome to Twin Peaks list all the locations around North Bend and nearby Snoqualmie and Fall City. On screen it looks like the middle of nowhere, but it's off Interstate 90, an hour's drive from Seattle.



'AND A DAMN FINE CUP OF COFFEE 'Lynch loves his coffee so much he has his own signature blend (order online). He has added interior design to his CV with Silencio, a members' bar in Paris (open to the public Tuesday-Friday after midnight).

#### THE OWLS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM 'Or the hotel isn't. Ben

Horne's Great Northern Hotel is, in real life, Salish Lodge (doubles from about £135). Wood-panelled but without rustic kitsch, it teeters on the edge of the 270ft Snoqualmie Falls. Hunt the forests for owls, FBI agents, or even... Bob.

'I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN IN 25 YEARS'Yes, Laura Palmer kept her promise. Until then, get your fix at Vancouver restaurant the Black Lodge, decorated like its weird namesake (chevron floor, red curtain). And Copenhagen's Log Lady café serves pie and coffee. But the weirdest? The loos at Mission Chinese Food in New York, which play the Twin Peaks theme and are covered in photos of Laura. CHRISTOPHER BEANLAND



Paris was all about bistros or haute cuisine until Iñaki Aizpitarte opened Le Chateaubriand in 2006. The modest interiors and dishes spiced up by his travels created a genre: 'bistronomy'. Iñaki's new London restaurant, Le Chabanais, will offer a bigger menu. 'But we never know what we're going to do until we do it!' he says. As he launches his next venture, Iñaki picks his favourite spots in each city. ROOKSANA HOSSENALLY

#### ondon 1

and I especially love the salads.' On-the-go snack: 'Beiteddine Express, the kebab place on Clarges Street, is good after a night out!' After-service bar: 'I head to Tony Conigliaro's new Soho bar, Termini, for great coffee and top-notch but simple cocktails.' Food shopping: 'I'm still exploring, so can I have a cigar shop? Sautter's in Mayfair is so atmospheric.'

Day-off dining: 'St John in Day-off dining: 'Le Baratin in the Smithfield has a very London vibe, 20th is a simple place with excellent wine and food, especially the brain.' On-the-go snack: 'I could eat the homemade soups and sandwiches at Chez Aline in the 11th every day.' After-service bar: 'El Café Bar in the 9th is one of those neighbourhood bistros that are sadly disappearing." Food shopping: 'Terroirs d'Avenir has a butcher, fishmonger, grocer and fromagerie. They know what I like but still offer something different to try.'



#### THE TRENDS TAKING OFF AND THOSE RUNNING OUT OF FUEL

.....

#### 💢 ARRIVALS 🔼

#### **BULLET TRAINS**

Not just in Japan. Zip from Paris to Barcelona in 6.5 hours, and there's a whizzy route planned from LA to San Fran. There's even talk of a Moscow to Beijing link

#### **FOOD HALLS**

The new food trucks when it comes to the hip way to eat. Even Anthony Bourdain is planning his own in New York

#### TRAVEL DATING

Forget Tinder, there are new apps on the scene. TourBar and Tripr connect travellers in the same place, while Wingman does the same on... planes

#### 💢 DEPARTURES 💟

#### **CLOSING TIME**

Not a problem at the Experimental Cocktail Club's Grand Pigalle Hotel in Paris, or at Los Angeles' Bar Covell, which has added five suites upstairs

#### PEER-TO-PEER PEES

Yes, someone has set up a bathroom-centric sharing economy called - what else - Airpnp, where spending a penny will cost you a few quid

#### **GAME OF THRONES TOURISTS**

It's back and so are they. This year watch out Seville and Córdoba. You'll find us in Cáceres instead - named Spain's gastronomy capital for 2015

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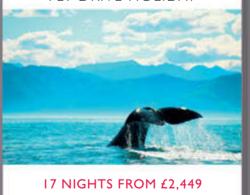


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## SOMEWHERE FOR THE WEEKEND? WATER FOR THE WEEKEND?

The serious slow-food movement on the simmer here for the past few years is starting to build up steam. By **Harriet O'Brien**. Photographs by **Ming Tang-Evans** 

T WAS ST DECLAN, they say, who imbued Waterford with its special natural qualities when he brought Christianity here in the fifth century. Fast-forward to today and it still has a feel-good glow. There are big skies and clear, fish-rich seas; beaches and hidden coves; hills, rivers and pastures reached by meandering lanes. But best of all is the food, particularly in the market town of Dungarvan and the seaside village of Ardmore, where St Declan once had his base.

Lying between the cities of Cork and Waterford in south-east Ireland, the area is remarkably easy to reach from the UK mainland: an hour's flight from Heathrow to Cork and about 45 minutes' drive east, and there you are. From London, West Waterford is no more arduous to get to than, say, Cornwall. Yet somehow it has remained oddly off-radar.

This being Ireland, it's easy to get caught up in local talk and find out who's who. The catalyst and hero of the food scene here is chef and restaurateur Paul Flynn. Originally from Dungarvan, he became a chef at 17, went to London and spent a decade working for Nico Ladenis at his two-Michelin-star restaurant; Flynn was promoted to head chef at 23. But, he told me, 'the tug of Ireland was too strong'.

We were talking in the new wine bar at **The Tannery**, the restaurant he set up with his wife Máire in 1997, a few years after he returned. He wanted to make the best possible use of the area's tremendous produce. Yet his Mediterranean-influenced, modern Irish menu was a gamble. 'It wasn't easy,' he said. 'We were offering Dungarvan a very different experience – contemporary food in an old leather factory in what was then a downtrodden part of town.'

The neighbourhood is now handsomely restored and The Tannery has since added

14 rooms (doubles from about £85) in a row of townhouses next to the restaurant, along with a cookery school and a kitchen garden. It's all beautifully presented and very functional, which is the hallmark of the Flynns. Decor is simple, with Irish flourishes such as tartan throws.

Breakfast is extremely laid-back: the fridge in your room is simply stocked with muesli, fruit and yogurt, pastries are delivered in the morning, and you eat it as and when you like. Flynn reckoned people wouldn't want the formality of a dining room and a cooked breakfast having eaten at the restaurant the night before. And I could certainly relate to that after a feast of local flavours the previous evening: the signature crab crème brûlée;

## THE SCENIC FISHING HARBOUR IS THE PLACE TO GO FOR A HOT SEAWEED BATH IN AN IRON TUB

pork belly with creamed cocoa beans; and lemon posset with elderflower jelly.

Dungarvan has several other great restaurants and cafés. **Merry's** gastropub, creaking with atmosphere in a woodpanelled former wine shop, is loved for its bistro-style food. Or try **The Moorings** pub on the harbour for a fish-chowder lunch. And stop for coffee and cake at the charmingly retro **Nude Food** café.

The town itself is an appealingly old-fashioned place, its brightly painted houses and bold-lettered shopfronts looking little changed since the 1950s. Wander along the quay; call in at the **Waterford County Museum**, where there's an absorbing overview of the area's story from the Famine to the World Wars; visit

atmospheric **Dungarvan Castle**, dating from the 12th century; and head to the beautiful beach at **Clonea**, east of town.

There's also music, of course: the best venue is probably **The Local** on Grattan Square, part-owned by Donnchadh Gough, who is often to be seen playing the uilleann pipes and bodhrán with his band Danú. There's an even greater sense of Irishness just outside town. An Rinn, the promontory at the southern edge of Dungarvan Bay, is a Gaeltacht, or Irish-speaking area, that welcomes visitors. Head beyond its modern bungalows to scenic little Helvick Harbour where fishing boats land their catches, and take a hot seaweed bath in an iron tub at Sólás na Mara, an organic healthcare centre and café overlooking the quay.

One of Dungarvan's most successful innovations has been its food festival. Galvanised by Flynn, the town launched a weekly farmers' market in 2006, and two years later the first **West Waterford Festival of Food** took place. It is now a three-day event in mid-April, attracting about 17,000 visitors. The 2015 show will feature Irish food dynasties such as the Flahavan clan (milling oats since 1785) and new talents such as Duncan Blair of the wildly popular Blairs Inn in Cork.

The festival's launch coincided with another propitious event, the opening of **The Cliff House Hotel** (doubles from about £140) just along the coast in historic little Ardmore. A modern building on the site of a 1930s family hotel, it sits magnificently above the coast. From the tall, glass-sided lobby and the picture windows in the bar and restaurant there are eye-stretching views over an astonishingly cobalt-blue sea.

But the outlook can't compete with the food coming from the kitchen of Dutch

Opposite, Bantry Bay salmon - iced, marinated, cured and maple-smoked - in The House Restaurant at The Cliff House Hotel



















#### SOMEWHERE FOR THE WEEKEND? WATERFORD

chef Martijn Kajuiter in The House Restaurant. In 2010 it was awarded a Michelin star. Ireland's first outside Dublin. Kajuiter arrived from Amsterdam six months before the hotel opened in order to research suppliers. He also lost no time in training up a forager.

Andrew Malcolm - who has the wonderful official title of Forager and Whale Watcher – took me nibbling along the hedgerows. As we sampled wild thyme, yarrow and sweet woodruff, he explained that he is a monitor for the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and keeps records of sightings, mainly of fin and minke whales in the winter. We scoured the horizon for whale blows. watched seals in a bay and returned to the hotel in time for dinner.

This was a gourmet adventure, with amuse-bouches of beetroot macaroons and tiny clay-baked potatoes; a starter of five little dishes of lobster (one of which was served on a large pebble); and olive-crusted monkfish with an amazing casserole of peas.

is Whitehorses Restaurant, a chic little

Among the other hotspots in Ardmore

place run by the three Flavin sisters, who rustle up a brasserie-style menu of just-caught local fish. There's also a big beach, kayaking excursions with Ardmore Adventures, craft shops – The Anchor and Ardmore Pottery - to browse, and the most magical cliff walk, so good I did it three times. This easy-going, 40-minute trail above the coast and through the village passes the remains of the seminary founded by St Declan in 416 (the holy well here is particularly serene), the skeleton of a shipwrecked cranevessel crowded with seabirds, and

the dramatic ruins of a 12th-century

carvings. Intact beside it is a tall and

precious books and relics.

tapering round tower, built as a belfry and storehouse for the safekeeping of

cathedral that still has some remarkable

Away from the coast, West Waterford rolls out green glories like a richly coloured carpet. I took a trip north to Lismore, winding my way along

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Bantry Bay salmon revealed at the table in The House Restaurant; Whitehorses Restaurant and its Helvick Harbour crab claws; Merry's pub in Dungarvan; rhubarb sorbet at The House; bookshelves at The Tannery and a confit cod dish served there; a sitting area at Whitehorses; foraged ingredients in The House's kitchen

riotously overgrown lanes and crossing the beautiful Blackwater River. The gardens (but not the buildings) at Lismore Castle are open to the public during the summer, with magnificent herbaceous beds in an upper section and a sculpture collection, including an Antony Gormley, laid out in the less formal grounds below.

This is grand-country-house territory, and there are other fabulous gardens

**BEETROOT MACAROONS** WERE FOLLOWED BY FIVE LITTLE LOBSTER DISHES, MONKFISH AND A CASSEROLE OF PEAS

nearby, notably those of the Tourin, Ballynatray and Dromana estates. There are foodie treats, too. The bright, elegant Summerhouse café in Lismore town has a lavish cake counter and a lunchtime menu of delicious salads. And at Cappoquin, a few kilometres away, is Barron's Bakery, a West Waterford

institution. It is run by Esther Barron, whose family has been baking in brick ovens here since 1887, and its café is suffused with the smell of fresh loaves: try the spotted dog (white soda bread with fruit) or barm-brack cakes to taste the very essence of this part of Ireland.

Chatting my way around West Waterford, I met Margaret Jeffares, founder of the gourmet group Good Food Ireland. Why is this area so little known, I asked. She explained that the west coast of Ireland gets the publicity and the crowds because tourism has been most actively developed there; historically, the west had little else from which to make a living. 'By contrast, the south-east has always been productive,' she said. 'It's especially good for fruit, potatoes and seafood. People were fairly affluent; they didn't need tourism.' So there's been great food here for a very long time; what's changed in the past six or seven years is that people have started to make some noise about it. The West Waterford Festival of Food takes place 9-12 April. For more information on

the region, visit www.ireland.com

#### THEINSIDETRACK



Chef, food writer and Waterford native Paul Flynn grew up in **Dungarvan** and opened his restaurant, The Tannery, there 18 years ago

'Drive along the Copper Coast. The shore between Dungarvan and Tramore is staggeringly beautiful - and almost deserted; you'll hardly pass another car. There are hidden coves, secret beaches and lots of little inlets. It's a must for anyone who loves exploring. In the 1800s this was a thriving copper-mining area, with the industry focused around the village of Bunmahon, which has a really good visitor centre in a disused church with lots of information on the mining days and the coast's geology.'

'Head for the farmers' market. This takes place every Thursday morning at Grattan Square in Dungarvan. One of

my favourite things here is Knockalara Cheese, made with ewe's milk from the cheesemakers' own flock. Stop by the Barron's Bakery stall, too, and try the Waterford blaa - a traditional local soft bap. O'Driscoll's sells amazing fish.'

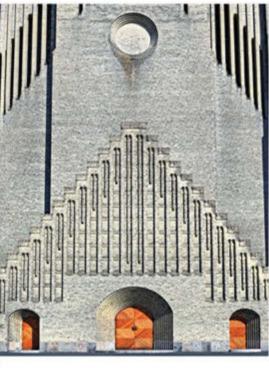
'Take a walk. Waterford's Comeragh and Knockmealdown Mountains are fantastic for hiking. Some routes can be challenging, but there's a fairly easy walk through rugged scenery to the Mahon Falls in the Comeraghs; we like to do it when we've been a bit too settled on the couch. Around Dungarvan there are lovely walks in Colligan Woods - it's gentle going and great for picnics.'

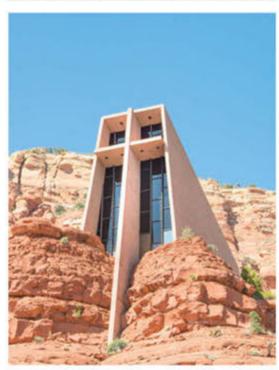
'Get out on the water. Take a boat trip from Youghal up the Blackwater River to Lismore. It's a memorable way to see less well-known inland spots, with fantastic views of hidden sights such as Strancally Castle, Dromana House and the Ballynatray Estate's Temple Michael. Or head out to sea from Dungarvan and do some mackerel-fishing.'



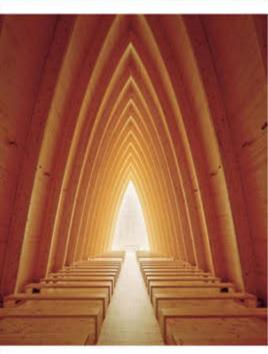












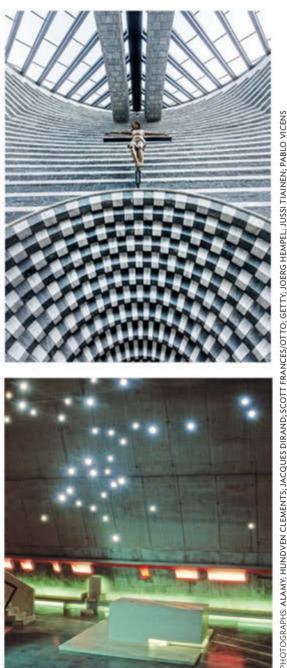




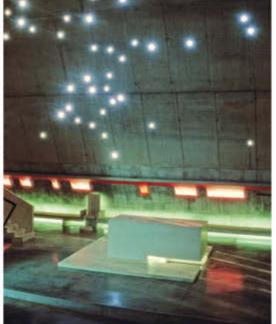












Worship at the altar of modern architecture in these divinely designed sacred spaces

Top row, from left: stairs in the sparse, cave-like Holy Redeemer Church in Tenerife, and the overlapping cracks that slash a cross-shaped opening across one concrete wall; Rome isn't just about frescoed domes, and Richard Meier's Jubilee Church embodies a different sort of soaring architecture with huge concrete curves like billowing sails; raise your eyes towards the heavens during worship in the village of Knarvik, Norway, and see shafts of light streaming through the angular timber-clad structure, which juts up to a pyramid-shaped spire (pictured).

Middle row, from left: Copenhagen's colossal Grundtvig Church is constructed of almost five million bricks - its western façade rises like a giant organ 49 metres towards the sky; the Chapel of the Holy Cross is wedged between two natural red rock buttes in Sedona, Arizona; a sculptural figure floats above the altar at Santa Monica Church in Madrid; the origami-style design for the Siegerland Motorway Church in Germany is based on the simplistic symbol for a church used on the country's road signs; inside Mario Botta's Church of San Giovanni Battista at Mogno in Switzerland, reflect upon the rows of grey Riveo granite and white Peccia marble.

Bottom row, from left: walk towards the light down the aisle of the pine-lined St Henry's Ecumenical Art Chapel in Turku, Finland; cages of local volcanic stones divide a space inside the Holy Redeemer Church in Tenerife; the cubist exterior of Madrid's Santa Monica is clad in weathered Corten steel panels; a wooden lattice casts a heavenly shadow on the ceiling of Kuokkala Church in Jyväskylä, Finland; Le Corbusier's Saint-Pierre de Firminy in the Loire is spangled with celestial light. FIONA KERR



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ARIS AND NEW YORK. Two of my favourite things.
And I have just discovered a highly satisfying way of expressing my love for them simultaneously – by ordering a Manhattan in the bar at La Réserve. The hotel and the cocktail have quite a lot in common. Neither is wildly complicated. Both are lovely to look at, sweet and moreish, and possess a certain underlying composure and balance that will keep the connoisseurs happy and the swells coming back for more.

However, before we step off the Avenue Gabriel and make our way to a cosy fireside table in the bar, a word or two, by way of background, on the La Réserve phenomenon.

It is a small portfolio with a big reputation – often linked to its formidable spa offering – and a fiercely loyal following. The brand is owned by Michel Reybier, a low-profile multi-millionaire. There are

currently five La Réserve properties: four in France and one in Switzerland. Outwardly they are very different. I remember my first visit to the Geneva flagship, not long after it opened in

## IT'S A SMALL HOTEL GROUP WITH A BIG REPUTATION AND A LOYAL FOLLOWING

2006. It is closer to the airport than it is to the city, off an anonymous sort of motorway, surrounded by woods. I arrived at night and it was as though I had stumbled upon a voodoo ceremony in full swing. Frenzied disco beats. A crazy safari-park vibe — candy-coloured acrylic sculptures of exotic birds perched on light fittings, leopard-skin rugs, elephants charging out of the woodwork. The entire place writhing with rosy-cheeked revellers, the detoxers and the retoxers merrily intertwined.

Geneva was followed by Ramatuelle, near St-Tropez – a pale, dreamy, lighter-than-air tone poem attached to a properly serious spa. Then there were the serviced apartments on the Place du Trocadéro – sleek, discreet, ideal for those with large families or bodyguards in tow – and La Chartreuse de Cos d'Estournel, Reybier's château in Bordeaux. And now there is the fabulous Paris hotel.

The intention here, I suspect, is to appear less like a hotel and more like an *hôtel particulier*. As, indeed, it originally was. Number 42 Avenue Gabriel is a classic piece of Haussmannian Paris. Baron Haussmann, at the request of Napoleon III, turned the capital into the biggest fixer-upper the world has ever seen. The building La Réserve now occupies was built for the Duc de Morny, the emperor's half-brother, in 1854, the year after Haussmann started tearing the city down and putting it back up







again. (A process that did not officially end until 1927. Can you imagine?)

The new hotel is a hymn to Haussmania. Discreet on the outside, shameless on the inside. It is not huge. There are 40 rooms, 26 of them suites. But there is a sense of tremendous generosity and volume throughout, of airy grandeur and a rarefied kind of intimacy. A pleasing paradox. Could it be the low lights and trick mirrors?

Chapeux off, therefore, to Jacques Garcia, the interiors megastar who also designed La Réserve Geneva and La Chartreuse de Cos. Apparently he found inspiration for this latest project in the paintings of James Tissot, whose name is these days perhaps most familiar not through his own work but through his association with a more famous artist. Edgar Dégas' portrait of his contemporary – dapper and complacent, supple as a noodle, topper and cape cast carelessly to one side – hangs in the Met in New

York. But Garcia's interiors are infinitely more sensual and dramatic than anything that ever slid off Tissot's brush.

The palette is largely limited to black, red and green, blue-grey, Champagne and chocolate, with here and there some vivid flashes of gold and pools of burgundy so deep you could drown in them. The furniture is by Henryot, the silk wallpaper by Rubelli, the fabric headboards by Prelle. All very much

## THE NEW PROPERTY IS DISCREET ON THE OUTSIDE, SHAMELESS ON THE INSIDE

comme il faut. But the whole thing is spared from earnestness or overfamiliarity by a cheerful sense of play – the fake books are as conspicuous as the real ones in the library – and by good taste closely informed by respect for the particular location and provenance of the building itself.

Ah, yes. Location. Worth a mention. Facing the Grand Palais and, at a slightly greater distance, the Eiffel Tower. Overlooking the Champs-Elysées. A few doors down from the presidential palace. A baguette-cut diamond's throw from Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. But the real joy is not so much what you can see from your balcony as what you cannot. Space itself. A precious buffer-zone of nothing but thin air between all the beauty behind you and all the beauty in front.

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### STYLISH LOOKOUT

# MANNABAY, ORANJEZICHT

This glamorous urban bolthole is set high above the city, backing onto Table Mountain National Park. It's a bit isolated, but given Cape Town's dinky dimensions, downtown and the beach are just a few minutes' drive away, and there's an on-call chauffeur in the evenings to ferry guests to supper and back. Brilliant general manager Mitch Terry (ex Ellerman House and Cape View Clifton) gives everyone a mobile phone loaded with essential numbers, including his pick of top restaurants. With just eight bedrooms, MannaBay is a great option for a group of friends, or for sociable couples happy to mingle over breakfast (eggs Benedict, perfect baked omelettes), lavish afternoon teas and Terry's pre-supper wine tastings. Dramatically decorated in bold colours, with playful wallpaper and carefully curated local art, the hotel has a staggering 3,000 books – recent novels bought from charity shops – which provide a colour-coded focal point in the bedrooms. The largest is the Versailles Suite, with a bed on the terrace for romantic sleep-outs. The pool terrace encapsulates the hotel's fun, fantasy vibe, with a chair-swing for two hanging from a tree and a safari-style boma for lazing on beanbags with fireside drinks. JANE BROUGHTON www.mannabay.com. Doubles from about £285; Versailles Suite about £345



## FAMILY FAVOURITE

### CAPE VIEW CLIFTON

Globetrotting stylist Jess Latimer has an eye for detail well beyond her 29 years. In transforming this former family home into a small hotel, her aim was to provide guests with a taste of her own breezy, laid-back coastal lifestyle. The result is young and contemporary but also very sophisticated. It will appeal to anyone who prefers a casual, personal approach not to be found at bigger, full-service hotels, and the location is brilliant at the price, with gasp-worthy views that take in the cableway station on Table Mountain, the Twelve Apostles mountain range and the four beaches of Clifton (check out the beautiful bodies on Clifton First Beach, below, while working out in the top-floor gym). With a lovely pool and, better still, drinks and snacks on hand, it's tempting to stay put, and many do. For families, there are two suites with proper kitchens and private terraces edged with greenery - a real luxury in cheek-by-jowl Clifton. All the rooms have great sea views, but 1A and 2B are particular favourites. JB www.capeviewclifton.co.za. Doubles from about £195; from about £365 for a three-bedroom suite

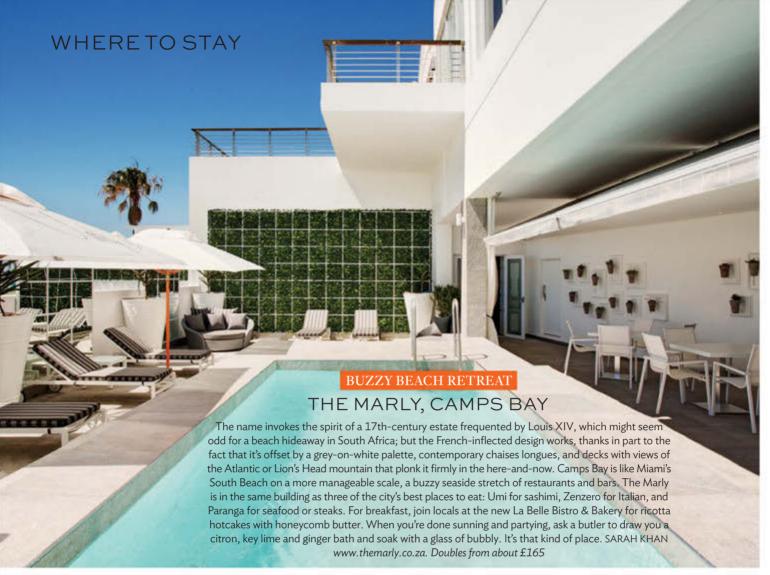


### PAMPERING LAIR

## THE ONE ABOVE, V&A WATERFRONT

The V&A Waterfront is possibly the most convenient place to stay in Cape Town, with shops and entertainment on tap, bang-on views of Table Mountain and easy access to both the Atlantic seaboard and the increasingly cool city centre. Now clever hotelier Liz Biden has added this extravagant, two-storey penthouse above the One&Only hotel to her Royal Portfolio. Private, bespoke and cosseting, this is the sort of place where absolutely everything is taken care of. The general manager is John Jackson, an accomplished chef who previously ran Biden's celebrity safari hangout, Royal Malewane. There are four boudoir-glamorous suites (none of them a dud) and an impressive mix of beautiful living spaces, including an extraordinary rooftop pool terrace from which you can watch yachts glide in and out of the marina below. The butler is your go-to guy for anything you may want, always on hand to pick up a gift or organise a dinner party around the pool, with dozens of lanterns and floating candles to add romantic clout. This is one for full-throttle privacy. JB

www.theroyalportfolio.com. From about £6,250 per night for up to eight guests





# CHIC PARTY HIDEAWAY

## LA GRENADINE, GARDENS

Parisian owners Mélodie and Maxime Deluc met and fell in love in Africa. Here they've created a Gallic Eden in a restored, 200-year-old house. Although it's handy for all the busy restaurants and bars on hip Kloof Street, once through the gates you're transported to a calming, sun-dappled garden shaded with avocado, guava, lemon and pomegranate trees and a hammock swaying in the breeze. The creative couple - she's an actress, he's a model, they both give tango lessons - have poured a tremendous amount of love into the place, and it shows: badminton rackets have been repurposed as mirrors; antique Singer sewing-machine stands now serve as bistro tables; a row of cinema seats lines a wall in the sitting room; iron keys dangling from the ceilings act as light switches; and a delicious breakfast of fresh baguettes, croissants and homemade jams is served on Mélodie's collection of 19th-century porcelain. The couple host parties and photo shoots at the house, but on quieter evenings there's a selection of records to choose from for the turntable behind the vintage bar. SK www.lagrenadine.co.za. Doubles from about £65 🕠



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# **BED-HOPPING WITH MATTHEW MACFADYEN**

The star of Ripper Street, Spooks and Pride & Prejudice tells Francesca Babb about his top hotels



'I DON'T GETTO
WANDER AROUND
MAYFAIR THAT OFTEN,
SO STAYING HERE
FFFI STIKE A TREAT'



### THE LOWELL, NEW YORK

'I love to go downtown to have fun, but I like to stay somewhere more secluded. The Lowell is on the Upper East Side, away from the bustle but right by the park. It's really gorgeous, with working fireplaces in the rooms. Wonderful.' www.lowellhotel.com. Doubles from about £530



### THE SHELBOURNE, DUBLIN

'I stayed here for about five months on a TV shoot. Usually after a few weeks, anywhere, no matter how luxurious, drives me up the wall – just the sameness of it – but this place was so fantastic I would definitely go back for a mini-break. The staff are brilliant and make everything so easy; it's just perfect.' www.marriott.com. Doubles from about £150



#### FORTE VILLAGE, SARDINIA

'There's a Chelsea Academy here, so the kids play football all day. Bliss. Our eldest has a very low boredom threshold, which is understandable as he's a teenager, but he loved it. The kids would go off in the morning, and we'd lie down, then we'd all meet for lunch and they'd go off again, and we'd lie down again. It was heaven.' www.fortevillageresort.com. Doubles from about £430 half-board



# THE CONNAUGHT, LONDON

'My missus [the actress Keeley Hawes] and I are great believers in short, sweet hits of two nights away. When you have kids, it can feel as good as two weeks, because you make the most of every minute. We've got a real soft spot for The Connaught. It's such a lovely hotel, with a small but fantastic spa.' www.the-connaught.co.uk. Doubles from £510

### LE BURGUNDY, PARIS

'This one is small and brilliantly done, with a swimming pool downstairs; and it's in an excellent location, just off rue Saint-Honoré, so you're in the middle of everything. There's a very delicate balance to be struck between looking after someone really well and making a fuss and fawning, and here they get it right. Plus the food is amazing and the bar is great, so we keep going back.' www.leburgundy.com. Doubles from about £340

Matthew Macfadyen appears in 'The Enfield Haunting' on Sky Living



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## WHERE TO STAY



# SALLY SHALAM'S GREAT BRITISH BREAKS

This month our happy wanderer sets off on a glorious riverside adventure across three counties just waking up from their winter snooze

#### **DORSET**

There's something so joyous about spring, all I really want to do is watch sunlight dapple on water and daffodils dance in the breeze. There can be few better places to indulge myself than the Saxon town of Wareham on the River Frome, where The Priory Hotel (doubles from £220; book through Pride of Britain Hotels), which really was once a monastic priory, has the most sublime setting. You can throw open a window in the morning and survey from gently sloping lawn to swift-flowing river, ancient water meadow to the bluish outline of the Purbeck Hills. At weekends a lively produce market is held beside Wareham's handsome bridge across the water; little delis and old-fashioned butcher shops pepper the busy high street, and somehow time stands still. The endearingly trad Priory evokes a sense of peace I preserve a little longer by stopping, on the way home, at Sculpture by the Lakes. A place for waterside reverie, open every day, it is the creation of sculptor Simon Gudgeon and his horticulturalist wife, Monique. Soon bluebells will carpet the

> walking trail around Gudgeon's artfully positioned open-air bronzes amid the whispering bulrushes.



River-threaded woodland and the plateau summit of isolated Pendle Hill lure walkers to the Forest of Bowland in Lancashire. Downham Brook wends its babbling way through the estate village of Downham, across the street from my latest discovery, The Assheton Arms (doubles from

£85). This dining pub rewards walkers with its smokehouse delights (haddock with ale rarebit, potted smoked duck), but the kitchen also makes much of Morecambe Bay and

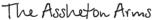
Lancastrian farm provender. Rooms, created from the old Post Office next door, are being teased into completion right this minute. Which means instead of attempting to navigate Bowland's narrow lanes after dark, you can feed the ducks before breakfast and take a spin to stock up on Lancashire cheeses and jars of chutney at Bashall Barn Farm **Shop** before heading home, or follow signs to Clitheroe for coffee in the palm-filled brasserie at The Emporium.



#### **HAMPSHIRE**

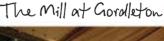
An early riser might spot an otter, but more likely the neon flash of a kingfisher darting over riverbanks laden with sunny blooms at the wisteria-strung Mill at Gordleton (doubles from £150). Eight pretty rooms at this flourmill-turned-restaurant are the understated backdrop to a dreamlike scene beside the River Avonwater. Until the days are longer, content yourself with a swift beer from the Vibrant Forest micro-brewery up the road on the Mill's river terrace, but in high summer dining tables are set all along the primrose-studded banks. The menu might well include Sopley asparagus with poached duck egg, wilted spinach, buttery puff pastry and hollandaise sauce, and trio (confit, loin and faggot) of pedigree Welsh lamb, reared in the New Forest, with fondant potato, braised red cabbage and home-grown rhubarb with ginger compote. There are three acres of grounds in which to walk it off, and a secret garden with a Victorian swimming pool, now a somnolent pond.





A view from The Priory Hotel













# HANNAH'S WINCHESTER

**WHAT IS IT?** An intimate, deliciously dreamy bed-and-breakfast in well-heeled Winchester. Hotel du Vin, whose first townhouse opened here two decades ago, has for years defined the city's hotel scene. New options have been slow to arrive, but Hannah's is an instant winner, tucked into a tiny close off the terraced prettiness of Parchment Street in a converted livery stable built in the late 1800s. Actually, 'converted' is an understatement. A bold reconstruction project has retained (under conservation) the original outer walls, but the interior was totally remodelled into three floors. On arrival, guests are greeted with openplan acreage: a moodily dark drawing room with big sofas and a log-burner, and a grand piano, no less, in the breakfast room. Three bedrooms of cathedral-like height all have a shower room and separate mezzanine with a roll-top bath

beneath a skylight for sybaritic stargazing. City loft meets country cosiness.

BEHIND THE SCENES Hannah McIntyre opened the B&B in 2014, and having worked at Hotel du Vin she knows how to do things – pristine bed linen, her own branded bath products – and has plundered architectural reclamation for doors and decorative fittings. This very private house even has a tiny courtyard garden for drinks from the honesty bar.

**SLEEP** The bedrooms overlook the courtyard and each is dominated by a wooden ladder-staircase leading to the bathing mezzanine. Sunlight from three generous windows dappled the pale oak floor in my room; the bed was sink-into sublime; in the shower, copper piping had been put to ingenious use to create taps, a showerhead and a hint of industrial-luxe.

Canteen or Rick Stein's, recently opened on the High Street. For sausages and mash in the cosy embrace of a dining pub, the Corner House is moments away. But make sure you allow for Hannah's breakfast feast, homemade or sourced from The Good Life farm shop: Kilner jars of her own granola, preserves and fresh fruit, loose-leaf tea and freshly blitzed juice are followed by eggs with herb-infused tomatoes and mushrooms.

**WHO GOES THERE?** Open Thursday to Sunday, this is a decompression chamber for stressed City and media couples in expensive jeans.

**WE LIKE** The peace and quiet in such a central spot, and lovely Hannah herself, who will direct you to all the right shops.

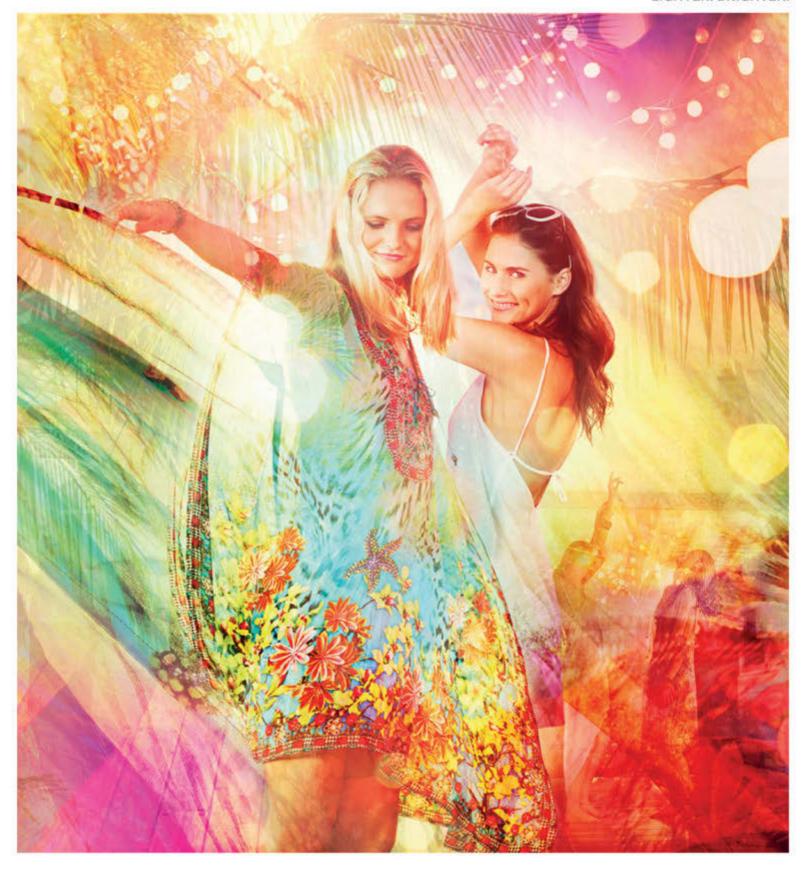
**WE DON'T LIKE** There's no parking (though it's easily walkable from the railway station) and no views. Baths require shinning up those custom-made stair-ladders so are only for the agile.

**CONTACT** +44 1962 840623; www. hannahsbedandbreakfast.co.uk. Doubles from £185 SALLY SHALAM



#### WHILE YOU'RE HERE

Winchester is packed with independent shops. On Parchment Street alone I found beautiful cashmere, leather bags and homewares at **Forme** – where everything is gift-wrapped at the counter with an encyclopaedic selection of ribbons – and specialist wine store and deli **Toscanaccio**, which hosts a regular pop-up restaurant, Savage Kitchen. **Jane McIntyre Design**, *above*, on nearby Southgate Street is a source of inspiration for Hannah's – so it comes as no surprise to learn that it is owned by Hannah's mother.



## **Dance**

The Team Members of LUX\* help people to celebrate life with the most simple, fresh and sensory hospitality in the world.



# NEIGHBOURHOOD ON THE UP

The capital of Western Australia is one of the world's most isolated cities, but this lively enclave is at the WORDS RALPH BESTIC





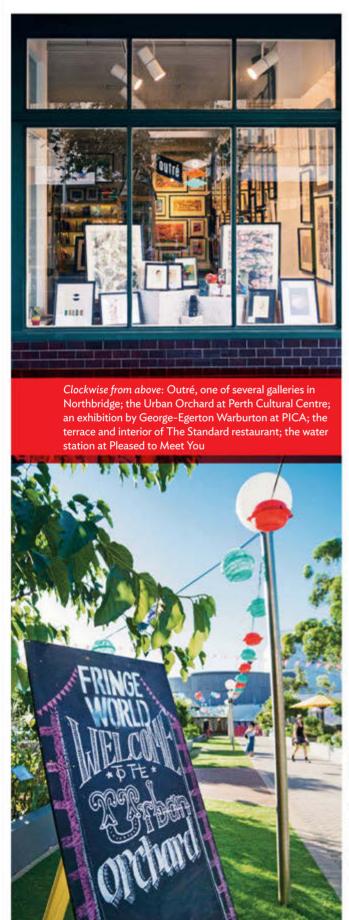




PHOTOGRAPHS: RALPH BESTIC; LUIZ FERREIRA/IMAGEBRIEF.COM

# Northbridge, Perth

vanguard of cool, with cutting-edge art and a bar culture to rival that of Melbourne and Sydney



#### SLEEP

Hotel aficionados adore the lobby whirr in the 74-room Alex Hotel. And street drop-ins give it a warm buzz. The whole place is filled with people seeking a break in the wine bar/café-style lobby, with its communal tables and benches. It's a 1920s building with a 1950s street-level bank frontage and a modern upper-storey façade. The best rooms face west (city views), and the rooftop terrace is a green haven of quiet. The mezzanine has books, magazines and a record player stacked with LPs. 50 James Street (+61 864 304 000; www.alex hotel.com.au). Doubles from about £105

#### DRINK

Down Williams Lane is the Prohibition-era-inspired Ezra Pound, with bare light bulbs, exposed brick, velvet-covered chairs and cool night owls sipping Blood and Sand cocktails out of jam jars. Evening sees the old alley swarming. 189 Williams Lane (+61 415 757 666; www. ezrapound.com.au)

■ Look out for the vintage Remington typewriter in the Mechanics Institute, once you find the place, that is - it's located up steps, via an external seating space. Then there's the red plastic parrot on a perch with 'Welcome' scrawled on it. 'Just kind of fun,' says bar boss Brett

Robinson. The animal skulls, the pot marked Moonshine, the apples waiting to be crushed into cocktails and the Epic Bloody Marys all hint at long, hot nights. 222 William Street (+61 892 284 189: www.mechanics institutebar.com.au)

■ The circus juggler in the 3-D painting is Gary Beadle, co-owner of Lot 20 with Andrew McIntyre, the strongman with the bikini-clad babe on his shoulders. The Wild Turkey with iced tea is a summer blessing, especially in the courtyard under umbrellas. 'But it's always a Pink Ruby Swizzle cocktail to kick things off,' says Beadle. 'No shaking here, only swizzle sticks.' 198-206 William Street (+61 861 621 195; www.lotco.com)

#### **EAT**

The Standard was once filled with locals playing chess, sipping coffee and illegally gambling. It is now revived, bright and breezy, finished with white-andblue-cushioned seats and rustic tables, and serving chef Chase Weber's must-have lamb's belly with sweet-and-sour eggplant and grapefruit. The Don Bocarte anchovies in the seafood charcuterie are the world's finest, he claims. 28 Roe Street (+61 892 281 331; www.the standardperth.com.au). About £45 for two

- Most patrons can't help gawking at the suckling pig on the spit - £7.50 per 100g - at Pleased to Meet You. 'We point veggies in another direction,' says owner Clint Nolan. The menu comprises Small, Bread, Garden, Animal and Sweets, and is for fast feasting on, say, grilled oysters, coconut ceviche, watermelon salad and 200g of the pig. Add in a Margarita slushy. 38 Roe Street (www.pleased tomeetyou.com.au). About £40 for two
- Nolan also owns La Cholita, a hugely popular Mexican offering an extensive menu fired up with plate-size tostadas, ialapeño quesadillas and plump enchiladas. 'When you see a smoking-hot girl from Mexico, you yell "la cholita!" Nolan explains. It's packed with red-shirted staff and more than 100 types of tequila, including a bottle of Partida Elegante Extra Anejo worth £1,650, or £65 a shot. 279 William Street (+61 892 279 238). About £25 for two
- Bivouac is a get-inearly-and-don't-budge sort of place, otherwise you'll miss demolishing the hand-cut fries flavoured with Moroccan salt and red-pepper aioli while simultaneously poring over the rest of the Mediterranean-influenced menu. Plate-sharing is favoured, so a Persian

Don't

PERTH CULTURAL CENTRE (WWW.PERTHCULTURAL CENTRE.COM.AU), HOME TO THE ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, THE HEATH LEDGER THEATRE, THE PERTH INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS (PICA) AND A FASCINATING CROSS-SECTION OF PEOPLE SITTING ON THE STEPS OF THE ADJOINING AMPHITHEATRE OR JUST AMBLING ABOUT WITH THEIR DOGS. THE PERFECTLY SITUATED PICA BAR, IN THE THICK OF IT ALL, DOES A BRISK TRADE.

# NEIGHBOURHOOD ON THE UP Northbridge, Perth

monkfish curry with sugar snap peas is delicious to pick at with a side of basmati rice and a yogurt-and-coriander salsa. The pavement tables are perfect for clustering around. 198 William Street (+61 892 270 883; www.bivouac. com.au). About £50 for two

#### **SNACK**

Tiny and buzzy, packed with design magazines and local art, **Little Willy's** is furnished with booths and old tables. Addictive coffee and just-baked cakes lie at the heart of this gem. Grab the table facing away from the window – so you can check everyone out. 267 William Street (+61 892 288 240)

#### **KICK BACK**

There's live music for a 150-strong crowd most nights at **The Bird**. The best spot is the old Chesterfield near the door, or, if that's taken, go to the courtyard, where more sofas abound. The stage is tiny but the music is pumping, and the beer to try is Feral Sly Fox, served up by a Flemishspeaking barman from Belgium. 181 William Street (+61 861 423 513; www.williamstreetbird.com)

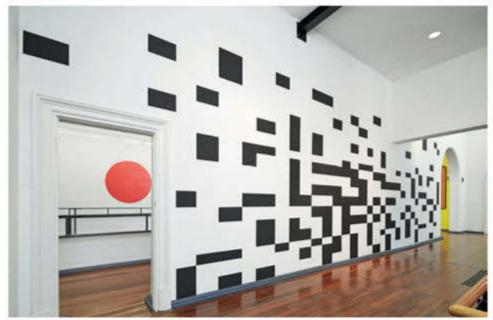
- Settle into a beanbag on the grass at dusk in Northbridge Piazza and you'll be in Aussie nirvana, especially if there's live sport on the TV. And, thoughtfully, it is opposite the Northbridge Brewing Company (it's wild on Friday and Saturday nights), where the Mango Wheat Beer, brewed on-site, will be flowing. 44 Lake Street (+61 861 516 481; www.northbridge brewingco.com.au)
- For six months starting in October Rooftop Movies, on the top of a rather ugly-looking car park, is where film buffs can escape into an eclectic range of movies, from the latest blockbusters to

old-school classics. Fake grass, deck chairs and a screen hanging across two sea containers give it a distinctly chilled feel. 68 Roe Street (+61 892 276 288; www.rooftop movies.com.au)

#### SHOP

When Shantha Cokis's Periscope shifted from a conventional city-centre retail unit two years ago to this light-filled space in a heritage building, it blossomed. The fashion boutique stocks the rather beautiful LifewithBird range and more edgy pieces from Ginger and Smart, as well as killer heels from Senso and whimsical sandals. 274 William Street (+61 893 289 056; www.periscope clothing.com.au)

- Quirky and ultrahip, Ruck Rover is the creation of sisters Claire and Isabelle Trolio, equal Aussie-rules footie fanatics and supporters of independent designers from around the world. Dear Creatures, Nooworks and Trollied Dolly are just some of the labels featured. The polka-dot odd-sock set (with three socks) will make you smile. 242 William Street (+61 892 283 502; www. ruckrover.com.au)
- Past the vintage cotton dresses, assorted curios and intriguing handmade jewellery at **Tú** (which means 'illustration and art' in Mandarin), you'll find the petite Tea for Tú tea parlour and tiny Stairwell Gallery. Back on the street. look for artist Michael Doherty's small train emerging from a wall. It's a little oddity, easily missed. 281A William Street (+61 892 277 628; www.tu.com.au)











Clockwise from above: the Pleasure Garden at the annual Fringe World, Perth's best known arts festival; snacks and drinks at Lot 20; the interior of Lot 20; magazines at Tú; One Place After Another at PICA; a garden table at The Standard





# LOCAL KNOW-HOW

# Miles Hull

CO-FOUNDER, ALEX HOTEL

'It was only a matter of time before Northbridge, and the Good Fortune Roast Duck House, was discovered. Hove The Moon too, for a midnight beer and burger, and Francoforte Spaghetti Bar, with its four types of pasta. The **Artbar** at the Art Gallery of Western Australia is wonderful for late-night exhibitions, cocktails and live music, and for an afternoon of fun I head to the Food Truck Rumble in the Cultural Centre. The Urban Orchard and Bar Pop is great for Fridayevening drinks. It overlooks the city and is surrounded by Northbridge's own fruitand-veggie garden. Old-style Kakulas Brothers is a favourite shop, where the smell of roasting coffee and spices is irresistible, and Common Ground has my kind of clothes and knick-knacks. I also like Beans & Bunches, a cute little flower store off William Street, run by a young and very creative woman who is anything but a typical and tacky florist. An added bonus is that there's a great vinyl shop out the back called Safari's Record Shack.'

PHOTOGRAPHS: RALPH BESTIC

# WASHINGTON DC

Lunch at one of the world's most recognisable addresses can become standard fare until some out-of-towners crash the party. By **Alyson Foster**. Illustration by **Hannah Reed** 

EY, MA'AM. Excuse me.
Ma'am?' I'm sitting on
the grass in Lafayette
Square, reading, when I
hear the polite voice calling. There,
standing a few feet away, are two
teenage boys eyeing me with a
hopeful expression.

I raise the book higher and try to feign deafness, but it's too late. They've seen me see them. 'Ma'am?' says one of them again.

So I sigh and put down the book. 'Yes?'

I've just fallen into a trap. There are only a few precious minutes of my lunch hour left and I'm about to lose them. For the past eight years I've been working in downtown DC and walking to Lafayette at lunchtime with a book and a cup of coffee, and I've learned to spot signature hunters from a distance. These idealistic prowlers represent a slew of organisations: Planned Parenthood, Greenpeace, Amnesty International. But their tactics are the same. They want you to sign their petitions, to hit you up for lifelong, monthly donations. They look innocent, but make no mistake: if you engage with them, they will latch on and not let go. Usually when I see them cruising the sidewalks I grab my book and flee. Today, though, I haven't been paying attention and now I'm going to pay.

It's the only downside to lunching in Lafayette.

Other than that, the park is one of my favourite haunts. I'm fond of all its weathered, elegant particulars. The city's trademark flowering trees. The retired guys playing chess on the stone tables. The rust-tinged fountain where the mallards splash around in the spring. (They linger just a few weeks – the ducks are

itinerants, like pretty much everybody else in this city.) If the novel I've brought can't hold my attention, then I watch the toddlers from a neighbourhood day-care centre as they attack the hapless pigeons. Or the interns from the nearby NGOs and congressional offices sitting on the benches, decked out in their suits and ID badges, testing out the new jargon, no doubt plotting their ascents to power.

I'm staring up at these two smiling boys and waiting for the spiel. But it doesn't come. Instead, the taller one points across the street that borders the south side of the park where the White House sits, glowing in the afternoon sun. It's the best-known address in the country, but I've been coming to this park so long that

and walked back to the office. I respect the First Amendment, but it's too hard to concentrate on the new Margaret Atwood novel with all that shouting.

'That's where Obama lives,' says the tall boy. He says it again, 'Right?' It's like he can't quite get his head around this fact.

The question is so obvious it sounds like a trick, but then I look up at them and see their faces. They're both almost giddy. Their accents – deeply southern – say that they're not from the city. No one from around here gets this amazed, I think. It's kind of a pity. 'That's the place, all right,' I say.

'So he's inside there,' the shorter kid says. 'Like right now.'

'Yeah. He's in there,' I say. 'Chances are good, anyway.' It's

# ONLY A FENCE, A LAWN AND SOME BUSHES SEPARATE ME FROM OBAMA. WELL, THAT AND ROOFTOP SNIPERS

the first family's residence has become another invisible fixture to me, like the requisite man-ona-horse statue.

'That's it, right?' says the kid.

'That's what?' I turn to look over my shoulder at the North Lawn. Beyond a small group of school children lining the iron fence, the expanse of green lawn looks almost pastorally serene. It's not always like that. Protestors gather here frequently. Their signs bear slogans about immigration reform. Or about human-rights abuses in Tibet. Or about Obamacare. They're another reminder of the dizzying number of causes in the USA, the impressive and wearisome breadth of the citizenry's grievances. There have been days when, crossing H Street and hearing the crowd in the distance, I turned around

been so long since I've thought of Obama actually *being* there, inside that house, of the physical proximity of the man himself. This conversation is reminding me of the strangeness of that fact. One of the most powerful men in the world is only a few hundred feet away. Only a fence, a lawn and some bushes separate us. Well, that and some snipers on the roof.

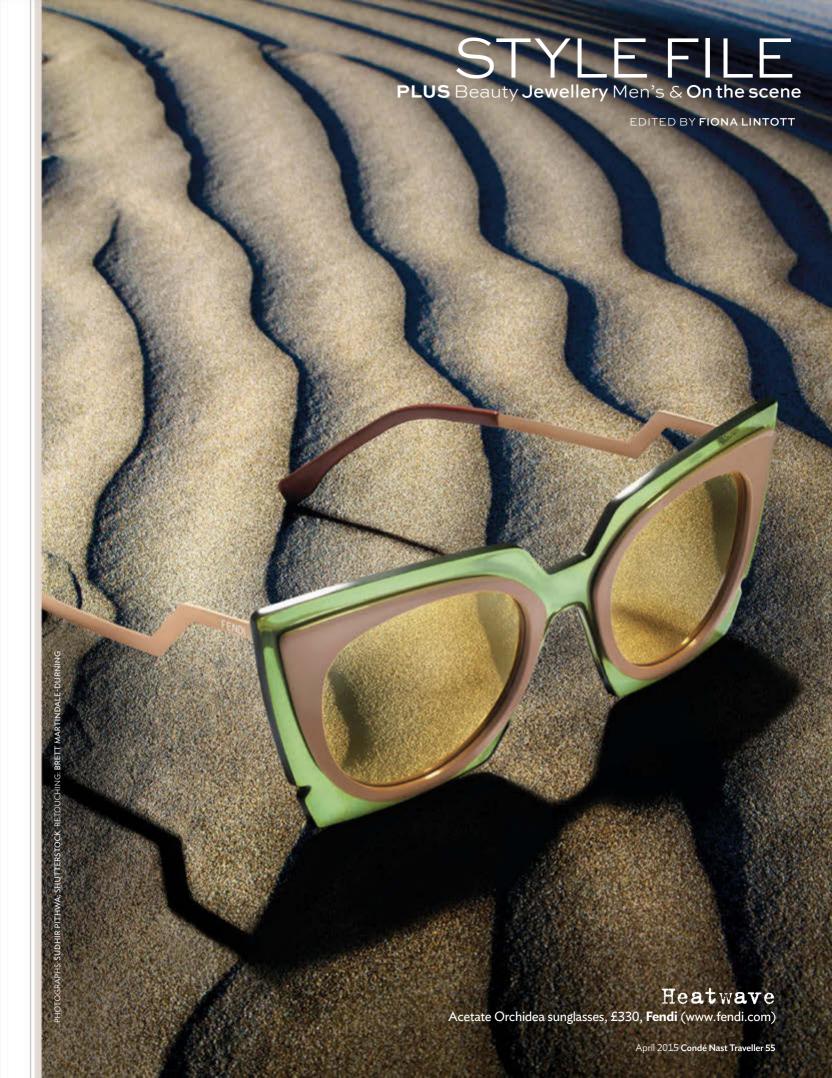
We're all quiet, marvelling for a moment. Me included. Only for a moment though. Then I remember to check my phone. I have to get back to work. So I sling my ID badge around my neck and stand up.

'Enjoy yourselves,' I say. 'It was nice meeting you.' And I go on my way.

'God is an Astronaut' by Alyson Foster is published by Bloomsbury







# The producer named in Music Week's 30 under 30 list has think of in the last year for the likes of Chanel and Red Bull.

The producer named in *Music Week*'s 30 under 30 list has organised almost every cool event you can think of in the last year for the likes of Chanel and Red Bull. And Mark Ronson passed him the baton of music director at starry London hangout The Arts Club, where he has drawn performers such as Sam Smith



# ON TOUR KIT

'I always pack a set of Ultimate Ears, the in-ear moulded monitors that the bands use. They double up as brilliant noise-cancelling headphones for flights. I also bring my Bose Soundlink Mini speakers, Tumi world adaptor, Mophie twin-charging case, Macbook Pro and Persol sunglasses. I have a rather large tour bus in my sights, but as much as possible the bands prefer to head home after a gig, so this might just have to wait for now.'







## ON MUSIC

'I studied at LIPA – Paul McCartney's school of music in Liverpool. It is a melting pot for musicians, where I've put together most of my bands: The Soul Jets and Three & A Half Men, plus Clean Cut Kid (CCK), my first project playing original songs.'



## ON TRAVEL HITS

'I was in Barcelona for Sónar festival and discovered an amazing tapas bar called Cervesería Catalana; you can't book a table but it is worth the wait. The smartest place I've stayed was Amangani in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The hiking is amazing and if you are lucky you can spot a bison or two on the trails. I go to Barbados every year, along with a lot of people in the industry, and I'm very fond of the family-run Sandpiper hotel.'

# ON THE SPOT

'The Soul Jets played with the Azerbaijani national drum team in Baku after being asked to collaborate an hour before the performance. The language barrier was tricky, but once they began to play, it all started to work. The band leader was this incredibly enthusiastic guy, singing complex rhythms at us with a massive smile on his face.'

## ON PARTIES

'We've been playing gigs as far-reaching as New Delhi and New York for folk like Poppy Delevingne and brands such as Hugo Boss. In the past, my bands have performed at Wilderness and Drifters festival on Osea Island – I'm overseeing the line-up for the latter next month.'

# ON WHAT'S NEXT

'I've had Friendly Fires playing at The Arts Club. And this year I have a great programme coming up, including Tinie Tempah and Bakermat. The plan is also to build on the success of Clean Cut Kid, sign more original acts and set up a recording label and music-publishing company.'

Go to www.cntraveller.com/drifters to watch ALR bands performing and to book, visit www.alrmusic.co.uk





he flight was long, then there was a second flight and a serious drive; it was possibly one of the longest

day galloping horses up and down in the shallow surf. In a post-Caipirinha daydream, I live here. www.uxua.com

# SHOP WATCH: Salt

The only thing better than discovering a new holiday store on my doorstep is one that specialises in fresh talent and hard-to-



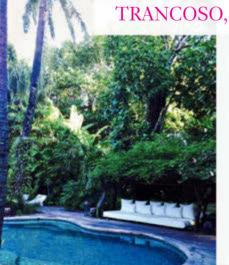
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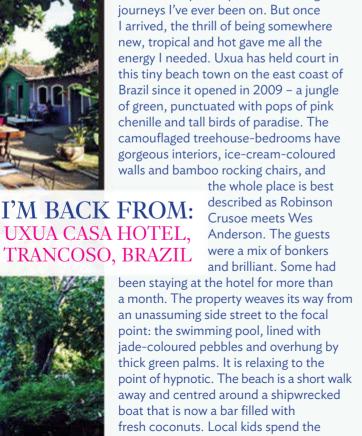
Stephanie Alameida has reset the benchmark for sunny city boutiques with a mashup of beach bohemia, including Flash tattoos and smart swimwear designs.

Opening at 77 Elizabeth Street in London this month, Salt will exclusively stock the bold prints of New York-based Harare Collections and Greek

swimwear label Athena Procopiou. Look out for floor-length dresses by

Spain's Delpozo and jewellery by Puerto Rican designer Venessa Arizaga. www.saltstore.com





## STYLE FILE

#### Where's your favourite place you've travelled to for work?

'As I was born in Kosovo. I try to go back and visit whenever I can. Performing there is always special.'

#### What fragrance do you wear on holiday?

'I'm a big believer in leaving an impression through scent. My trick is to apply lotion and body oil and then do a couple of quick fragrance spritzes. It's the first thing I put on after I get out of the shower. A personal favourite is DKNY MYNY and, of course, Chanel No.5 is a classic.'



#### What was your most memorable trip?

'For my birthday last November my closest friends and I hired Dar JL, a massive house on the outskirts of the Medina in Marrakech. It's such a beautiful country and it was amazing to be there with the people I love the most.'

### What beauty products do you pack in your hand luggage?



'I always carry L'Occitane soaps - the scents are amazing. And most days red lips are my go-to, so I'll take my Rimmel London line Rita Red lipstick and MAC Ruby Roo.'



# BEAUTY KIT: RITA ORA ON HER TRAVELS

The chart-topping, Oscar-performing singer and Fifty Shades of Grey star talks to Tabitha Joyce

#### Which are your top skincare brands?

'I love face oils and serums, especially the ones by Caudalie. I massage them into my skin to help detoxify. If I go out and I'm not getting my make-up done, I'll use a luminous moisturiser. Laura Mercier does a lovely one - it's tinted and has shimmer.'

#### How do you like to stay fit?

'Recently I've gotten into Barrecore. I'm not a massive cardio fan but l like these sorts of classes because they're about moving to the beat. I also mix in SoulCycle and yoga.'

#### Does your skincare change depending on the season?

'I'm really into masks, especially in winter when my skin is prone to getting very dry. I'm a fan of the brand Fresh. The rose collection is lovely and I adore the Black Tea mask.'



'I love bright-white nails as they feel clean and match any outfit. But my favourite shade is Rimmel Breakfast in Bed.'

#### Who do you go to for a haircut or colour?

'I'm always changing my hair. My stylist Chris Appleton and I never stop searching for inspiration. We visit galleries together, or look at people on the street and buy lots of books.'

#### Who has given you the best beauty advice?

'My grandma taught me to put toothpaste on my spots. It really works to dry them out. Also, I learned from my mother how to tweeze eyebrows. In school I was always the one walking around with tweezers, plucking my girlfriends' eyebrows. At lunchtime there would be a line KEVYN AUCOIN of people wanting to have it done.'

Clockwise from left: Rita Ora for Rimmel Nail Polish, £2.99, Rimmel (www.boots. com). Session Series Styling Cream, £16.50, Catwalk by Tigi (www. asos.com). Sensual Skin Enhancer, £38, Kevyn Aucoin (www.space nk.com). Vinexpert Firming Serum,

Caudalie (www.caudalie.com). Soap, £4.50, L'Occitane (www. loccitane.co.uk). Chanel No.5 perfume, from £49, Chanel (www.chanel.com)

#### Best hair products?

'I use Tigi Catwalk Styling Cream and Oribe's Dry Texturizing Spray daily, and a mask every week for 10 minutes: Kiehl's Deeply Repairative Hair Pak is great.'

What is your number-one beauty travel tip?

> 'I carry Kevyn Aucoin's under-eye concealer in my bag. It works like magic to cover dark circles.'









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# MAN ON A MISSION

Seasoned diver Jack Assanda seeks mind-blowing sights in this year's diving hotspot, Raja Ampat

e set off from the already far-flung port of Sorong on West Papua, Indonesia and head to the super-remote Raja Ampat islands, a place untouched by modernity, and home, I've heard, to some of the best diving in the world. I'm on a quest to top my first dive back in 1998 at Drake Bay on

I'm on a quest to top my first dive back in 1998 at Drake Bay on Costa Rica's Pacific coast, where I swam with hundreds of black-tip sharks – an experience I've never matched on dozens of subsequent dives everywhere from the Andaman Islands to Vietnam.

But I have a good feeling about Raja Ampat as we chart our way through the thousands of tiny islands, each one thick with vegetation. This is the heart of the old spice trail – the Dutch fought hard for these isles, rich in nutmeg, eventually trading one of them with the British in exchange for Manhattan. The region is peopled by Papuans, many of whom still live the slow-paced lifestyle of their ancestors.

As soon as we're in the water we see that this unhurried way of life and the fact that there are no rivers pulling silt into the sea ensure unmatched visibility of the incredible biodiversity, which has flourished thanks to a law banning shark finning. We see

whale sharks, the world's biggest fish, which feed on the

extraordinary plankton and phytoplankton that hang in patterns in the ocean. The corals are at their most colourful in the shallows. Swimming in and out of them, we are struck by the beauty of the underwater fields, the individual corals sometimes edged with black and fluorescent purple, sometimes very bright sulphur yellow, always patterned in ways we didn't expect.

Diving at night is a different experience. Everything closes in on you and the sound of the sea is different, more ominous. We carry powerful LED lamps as we swim around the oyster beds. The light focuses my attention and I am captivated by pygmy seahorses, colourful slugs and near-invisible shrimps.

During the day my attention switches back to the big picture. As well as extraordinary lobsters and tonnes of turtles, I witness one of the world's most extraordinary natural phenomena: a manta cleaning station, where the three-metre rays allow tiny fish to eat the parasites from their skin. It's basically a giant manta-ray spa.

Ultimately, I know that in order to discover the greatest secrets of the ocean I'm going to have to surrender to it, and so I agree to a drift dive. We let the strong currents transport us at the pace of the sea creatures. I am swept up alongside a school of fish big enough to block out the light. They move as one, like starlings in the sky. Suddenly they shift and the view above us opens up. Through the dappled light I see cliffs of soft coral pulsing with fish. The submarine landscape is incredible: amazing pinnacles and caves, and beyond them a shoal of what must be 50,000 angelfish, all sharp tails and synchronised swimming. Harmony on this scale is astonishing. And here, under the water, I achieve a kind of serenity like never before. www.tigerblue.info/raja-ampat



READ THIS The Silent World: A Story of Undersea Discovery and Adventure, by the First Men to Swim at Record Depths with the Freedom of Fish. The subtitle of Jacques Cousteau's 1953 masterpiece tells you all you need to know.

**DOWNLOAD THIS** 'Stella Was a Diver and She Was Always Down'. With its claustrophobic soundscape and scuba-inspired lyrics, Interpol's post-punk classic is ideal for anyone wanting to lose themselves underwater.

# GET THE LOOK: THE GRADUATE

Take a tip from Dustin at his most aimless and drift along without a care (or a shirt)



From top left: Bulldog shorts, £135, **Orlebar Brown** (www.orlebarbrown.co.uk); Anthelios Protective SPF50 Oil, £17.50, **La Roche-Posay** (www.boots.com); Wayfarer sunglasses, £120, **Ray-Ban** (www.mrporter.com); Eros Eau de Toilette, £64 for 100ml, **Versace** (www.harveynichols.com)



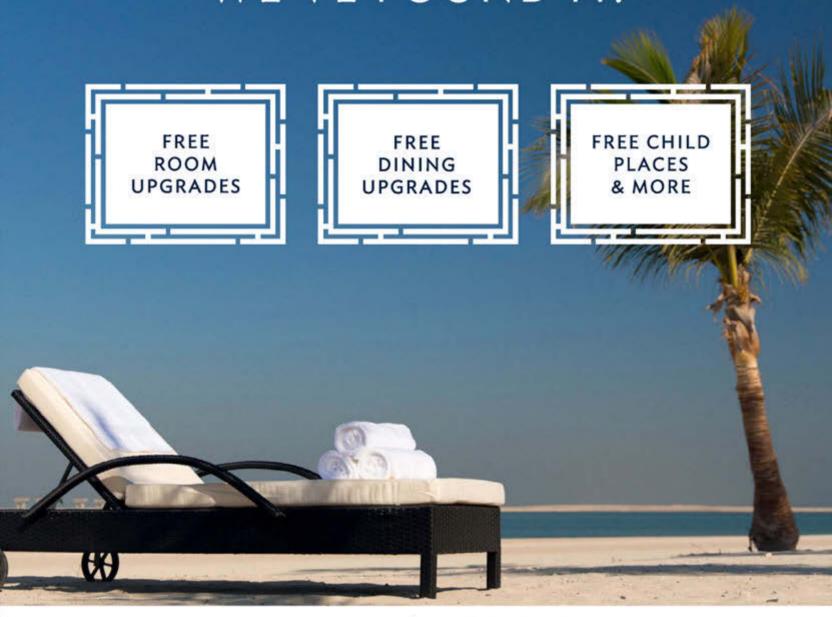
# DAVID'S POSTCARD FROM... THE EVERGLADES

I'll call him Jesse. He has an alligator medallion and an alligator ring. He sits atop his airboat, charismatic beyond words, dispensing aperçus, his contempt for anything more effete than his gnarled American outdoorsiness evident in his every move. I look up at him as he pilots us carefully across the wetlands. I suspect his politics lie some lightyears to the right of mine, but there is no point denying it: I am at least a little bit in love with him. Here I am in the Everglades, left, of course, on one of those Gentle Ben-style boats that sits on the surface of the water powered by what is basically an enormous desk fan on the back. Jesse steers us down one of the waterways cut in the sawgrass with Haussmann-like efficiency. I sit really very close - as it seems to me - to the water, which contains enormous, fearsome beasts, floating like the world's most malign logs. It is, I think to myself, the closest I have come to being imperilled by man-eating megafauna. Overhead, a squadron of pelicans fly in perfect formation. Hawks circle. The landscape is haunting and weird, its beauty given added piquancy by the presence of the crocodilians. A colleague of Jesse's arrives on a smaller, more agile craft. I ask Jesse how fast it can go. He says anything over 60mph is seriously dangerous, as there is a risk the boat will leave the water entirely. Motivated by some perverse desire to prove that lifestyle journalists from England are just as tough as alligator kings from Florida, I ask him to take me on a bit of a razz. Sitting there, my cheeks billowing in the wind as we power at some profoundly illegal speed across the wetlands with just a couple of inches of the boat's hull connected to the surface. I realise I am. as ever, more of a risk to myself than any alligator will ever be.



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# Natural HIGH

The original famed VIVAMAYR health resort is taking its winning 'medical health cure' concept further into the Austrian mountains, to a stunning second centre: VIVAMAYR Altaussee. Come for a taste of the high life

t's a bit like the six degrees of separation theory: everyone knows someone who's been to VIVAMAYR, and comes back glowing, full of energy and evangelical about the whole experience. The Austrian health resort, with its idyllic location in the village of Maria Wörth, near Klagenfurt, on the picturesque shores of Lake Wörthersee, has no shortage of fans — many of them hard-working celebrities feeling burnt out. They return again and again for the unique combination of medical expertise, detoxification and wellbeing treatments. A healthy outdoor lifestyle in a blissful natural setting leaves visitors feeling truly refreshed. If you're in need of a health re-boot, it doesn't get much better.

From April 2015, those who long to visit VIVAMAYR have a tricky decision on their hands. How to choose between the original Maria Wörth property (now at its best after state-of-the-art refurbishment) and the brand-new VIVAMAYR Altaussee? The latter, in the pristine Salzkammergut region, boasts just as much fresh air and crystalline water – key ingredients for invigoration.

What's more, VIVAMAYR Altaussee offers the same highly effective wellness formula as the Maria Wörth property, but with an added emphasis on the healing properties of mineral-rich waters - so abundant in this part of Austria. It is, after all, a stone's throw from Salzburg, a town famed for its salt mines. The powerful blend of mineral salts in the Altaussee make this an ideal second location for VIVAMAYR. Under the guidance of lead clinicians Dr Harald Stossier and Dr Fegerl, a highly trained medical staff prescribes a bespoke programme for each patient, combining traditional and modern naturopathic therapies with the latest sophisticated diagnostic tests. Choose from a variety of treatments - from tailored mineral-salt procedures to oxygen therapy - designed to treat respiratory problems, skin ailments, arthritis, rheumatism, fibromyalgia and more. Why not combine the in-resort treatments with a range of mountain and aquatic activities in the clinic's stunning alpine surroundings? Throw in a tailored nutrition regime and it's impossible not to come back transformed and energized. The vast medical department ensures clients leave with the understanding and skills to enable them to achieve long-term improvements back in the real world.

All this in a tranquil glass and wood building that both benefits from and enhances the mountain scenery. VIVAMAYR is looking remarkably sprightly for an institution that's nearly 100 years old. It must be something in the water.

Visit vivamayr.com for more information





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# FAMILY



## DENIS IS AND SEYCHELLES

This private island is everything the Seychelles should be. Its 375 acres are beautifully isolated and unspoilt, with palm trees and white, sugar-soft sand. Scattered along the north-west tip are 25 ocean-facing, open-plan cottages, all within easy reach of the main building and its restaurant, bar and freshwater outdoor pool (distance matters when it comes to carrying clobber and the constant toing and froing for forgotten suncream and favourite toys). Bag the Family Cottage, which sleeps two adults and up to three children (the living room doubles as a second bedroom), or the Beach Villa, which has its own pool so kids can splash around noisily without disturbing anyone else's afternoon nap. Those with tech-hooked teenagers, be warned: there's a TV and Wi-Fi in the library, but that's it - so they'll have to be cajoled into playing snooker and old-fashioned board games instead. The sheltered, shallow lagoon is ideal for snorkelling, and there are boat trips and diving lessons on offer for the over-10s. Younger ones will be cock-a-hoop over turtles nesting on the beach in October and November (Denis had more than 100 nests last year), and they'll spend hours mesmerised by the giant tortoises in a huge enclosure a few minutes' stroll away. Borrow bicycles (no

need to worry about venomous snakes or malaria here; nature in the Seychelles is almost all gentle) and take a spin to the farm to pet the pigs and collect chickens' eggs, offering prizes for the first fledgling twitcher to spy the pretty Seychelles magpie robin – one of the world's rarest birds, now breeding on the island – the delicate, orange-winged paradise flycatcher or the velvety warbler. Food is organic and mostly home-grown (the island produces its own yogurt, cheese and all kinds of vegetables), including octopus curry and pumpkin chutney on Creole nights, fresh fish cut into sashimi and barbecues on the beach. A lo-fi, natural paradise. JOURNEY TIME A 10-hour flight to Mahé then another 30-minute flight

TIME DIFFERENCE +4 hours

INSIDER TIP On arrival, ask resident environmental expert Andre Labiche for a tour of the island, including the farm – he'll immediately capture everyone's interest.

BOOK IT Turquoise Holidays (+44 1494 678400; www. turquoiseholidays.co.uk) offers seven nights' full board in a Family Cottage from £8,450 for two adults and two children, including international and domestic flights.

## FAMILY... SIMPLE BEACH PLASURES



Kaya mawa malawi

It's certainly not on anyone's beaten track, but this magical, sunny spot should be on everyone's radar for a post-safari flop. Young owners James and Suzie Lightfoot pull out all the stops to keep children busy, engaged and even unwittingly enlightened. The hotel is built into the rocks above a beautiful beach on the southern shores of Likoma Island on Lake Malawi, which has no tar roads or mains electricity. Each of the whimsical bedrooms at Kaya Mawa (the name translates evocatively as 'maybe tomorrow') is different in shape and form, but all are decorated with an unerring eye for the boho appeal of polished concrete, crisp white mosquito nets, weather-beaten Zanzibari chests and lamps, and elegant, beaded bed covers and cushions (produced at Suzie's Katundu textile workshop). There are three family-friendly suites with two bedrooms each, and one of them, Mainja, has its own little swimming pool. First prize for families, though, goes to nearby Ndomo House - the Lightfoots' home when they are in Malawi and no guests are staying - with its four bedrooms, sun-baked terraces with jaw-dropping vistas of the lake, a games room and a private pool. It also comes with a nanny, cook and housekeeper so there's no need to worry about clearing up the mess. The wide beach is exceedingly safe (even if the sand is not the softest in the world) and there are plenty of paddle-boards and kayaks, waterskis and Laser sailing boats; instructors at the nearby PADI dive centre (it's just around the bay) take those aged eight and upwards. Children can also go mountain-biking and visit the local primary school for a game of football they will never forget (there's a massive baobab tree in the middle of the pitch). Everything here is relaxed, slow-mo and endearingly otherworldly.

JOURNEY TIME A 13-hour flight to Lilongwe via Nairobi, then a one-hour transfer

**TIME DIFFERENCE +2 hours** 

**INSIDER TIP** Take teenagers on a guided quad-bike tour of the island, stopping at the century-old St Peter's Cathedral and the open-air market in Mbamba, one of the busiest, blariest little villages in Africa.

BOOK IT Trailfinders (+44 20 7368 1200; www.trailfinders.com) offers seven nights' full board from £9,199 for two adults and two children under 11, including flights and transfers.

## CAPE WEIGAMA SRI JANKA

This newcomer on Sri Lanka's southern cliffs, sister property to Ceylon Tea Trails, knocks spots off the other hotels on the coast with its detail-driven approach. The residences in wattas (gardens) that share a pool are best left to couples; instead, book one of the four-suite villas (the two suites on each floor can be connected). These are arranged around a shallow pool at sea level, a short stroll from the sand, so water babies can jump out of bed and have their armbands on in a second. Swimming teachers are on hand, and there's an ice-cream cart for treats. The resort is flanked by two beaches which, although not private, are so deserted that they might as well be, and they are suitable for swimming (a rarity on the Sri Lankan coast, where currents can be strong). Older ones can try paddle-boarding, surfing and windsurfing, and there's a PADI-accredited dive outfit run by a friendly couple who know how to take the fear out of that first diving experience. Children sorted, grown-ups are free to head for the spa or the infinity pool overlooking the ocean. Then round up the posse and slow the pace, pootling along on a guided bike ride past lilypad lakes, temples and villages with strange-sounding names (Moodugamuwa, Kubalgama); or take a boat trip to see blue whales. Three wildly different restaurants rule out the possibility of culinary claustrophobia. Teens will love choosing ingredients - fresh fish, vegetables, exotic fruit - from the on-site market and watching the friendly chefs at De Mauny restaurant turn them into delicious fusion dishes. Alternatively, the curries at open-air Kumbuk are the gentlest introduction to spice. For date night, book the hotel's babysitter and dine at the intimate, 12-seater teppanyaki restaurant, Misaki. JOURNEY TIME A 10-hour flight to Colombo, then

a two-hour drive or 30-minute seaplane trip TIME DIFFERENCE +5.5 hours

**INSIDER TIP** The colonial town of Galle is a 25-minute drive away. Take the children to the lighthouse where local daredevil teenagers can be seen diving into the water. **BOOK IT Cox & Kings (+44 20 7873 5000; www.** coxandkings.co.uk) offers a five-night trip from £2,355 per person, including three nights at Cape Weligama, two nights at Ceylon Tea Trails, flights and transfers.



PHOTOGRAPH: MICHEL FIGUET

# LUXURY FAMILY ESCAPES 2015

*Introducing the new collection from Carrier bursting with inspirational ideas for 2015* 

#### Jumby Bay, A Rosewood Resort, Antigua

Parents and children alike will love kicking off their shoes and having their toes in the sand at this beautiful private island escape. Families will love the extensive fully-inclusive approach on offer here. Children stay free. Save up to £3700. Stay 7 nights and up to 2 children under 12 years old stay free. Prices from £12,010 per family based on 2 adults and 2 children sharing a Beachside Courtyard Suite on an All Inclusive basis (based on May half term).



# Domes of In August last three bedroom you are in a me and receive a I Prices from £5 Suite Garden Flying time to Crete: 4 hours

#### **Domes of Elounda, Crete**

In August last year, 20 new villas were unveiled. There are now 90 two and three bedroomed suites and villas – although due to the layout, you will feel like you are in a more private, boutique property. Save up to £1340. Stay 7 nights and receive a 15% early booking reduction and complimentary half board. Prices from £5150 per family based on 2 adults and 2 children sharing a Family Suite Garden View with Outdoor Jacuzzi (based on summer holidays).

#### The Residence, Mauritius

You will find yourself beaming at the sight of your little ones discovering shimmering shells and crabs as they paddle along immaculate white sands and shallow turquoise waters at this colonial-style resort. Save up to £3130. Stay 7 nights, pay 5 and receive 50% reduction on second room for up to 2 children. Prices from £5900 per family based on 2 adults and 2 children staying in 2 Colonial Garden Rooms with half board (based on October Half Term).

 $Voted\ Favourite\ Tour\ Operator' at\ the\ Cond\'e\ Nast\ Traveller\ Readers'\ Travel\ Awards\ 2014.$ 







## FAMILY... SIMPLE BEACH PLASURES



#### O(EAN VIEW HARBOUR IS AND, BAHAMAS

For the past 40 years, Ocean View has been the Caribbean's best-kept barefoot secret. Laid-back and incredibly chic, this charming guesthouse might not be specifically aimed at families but it hits the right notes for a holiday with children of all ages. Bought by the inimitable Pip Simmons in the late 1970s when it was a haven for the fashion crowd and anyone with an eccentric streak (at one point she had four goats, a donkey, three horses, two rabbits, four dogs and a cat), it's like a private home with all the bonuses of staff. Since 2013, Pip's son Ben has been in charge, adding two gorgeous new cottages, Marley's and Tree Trunk. But Pip's Cottage is still the best for families: two children can sleep in the front room and there's a outdoor clawfoot bath that overlooks the beach so kids can be scrubbed clean behind the ears while they are happily distracted by all that's going on outside (interconnecting rooms in the main house are also a safe bet, and cribs and cots can be added on request). Here, it's all comfy floral-print sofas and low-key living, gathering around the huge wooden dining table in the main house for meals as a team of cooks rustle up delicious dishes in the kitchen. There's no printed menu, just simple, straightforward food that magically appears without guests having to think about it (budding young chefs can don aprons and help out making cookies). There are huge portrait paintings on the walls, a guitar idling in one corner, bowls of apples in another. But what makes this place unbeatable is its location, a hop and a skip away from the famous Pink Sands beach and the clear, turquoise water. Of course, there are plenty of opportunities to get busy with all the activities that island life has to offer (paddle-boarding, snorkelling, diving) but really, the best thing to do is lie back on a sunbed sipping a Goombay Smash, with one eye on a book and the other on the mischievous imps running free nearby.

JOURNEY TIME A nine-hour flight to Nassau, then a 20-minute flight to North Eleuthera and a five-minute water taxi to Harbour Island

**TIME DIFFERENCE -5 hours** 

**INSIDER TIP** Rent a boat and set off to the neighbouring islands for castaway picnics and turtle-spotting.

BOOK IT +1 242 333 2276; www.oceanviewclub.org. Pip's Cottage from about £600

#### POSADA MARGHERITA TUJUM, MEXICO

Halfway down Tulum's gorgeous 12km of palm-fringed white-sand beach there's a painted driftwood sign stencilled with the word 'Gelato'. Underneath it are a few beautifully shabby, faded wooden beach chairs and a swing seat. This is Posada Margherita, a very laid-back Italian hotel and beach restaurant that's pitch-perfect for families. Most of the generous bedrooms, housed in eight cottages clustered throughout the jungly gardens, can sleep three or more, and come with king-size beds. The design is simple: whitewashed walls and wooden floors, striped cotton and oversized wooden bedheads that double up as screens so families can share yet retain some privacy. There's everything that's needed, not a stick more, and it's all the better for that. On the beachfront is the restaurant - a shack with an open-sided kitchen where an array of produce that any Tuscan market would be proud of is piled up outside: baskets of bright-red tomatoes, acid-green limes, tins of excellent olive oil and sacks of flour. Along with fish straight from the sea, these top-notch ingredients are used to create amazing dishes. It's impossible to resist going back again and again for the white fish lightly poached in sea water, and the garlicky tagliatelle with prawns. The ice cream is as good as it gets, especially the pistachio. Youngsters love the table on its own at the front: when a tropical storm blows in, which happens sometimes, just batten down the hatches (literally). As the day slides away, cocktails are shaken by cute barmen and served in oversized jam jars, while sun-kissed children with knotty hair build Mayan ruins out of sand. The garden is lit with hundreds of tiny candles, some perched next to tiny potted cactus plants on wooden crates, others in old mirrored cabinets that reflect the flickering light. The service may be a little sulky at times, but the occasional fly is needed as a reminder of how perfect the ointment is.

JOURNEY TIME A flight of 10 hours 40 minutes to Cancún then a 90-minute transfer

**TIME DIFFERENCE** -6 hours

INSIDER TIP Splurge on keepsakes at the beach boutique, which sells delicate jewellery from New York, wildly expensive bikinis and super-soft T-shirts (on Christmas Eve, the hotel gave one to each of the children eating in the restaurant that said 'Hey, Santa, don't forget about me!').

BOOK IT +52 984 801 8493; www.posadamargherita. com. Family room sleeping five from about £185









## FAMILY... BIG ADVENTURES



#### ESCAPADES IN INDIA

When children are ready for India but not quite Mumbai, bring them to Kerala - the country's most southern, sleepiest state. It's a gentle introduction to its colours and character but without nearly so much chaos. First up, there are the animals - a sure-fire winner for all ages. On a dawn safari in Nagarhole National Park, blearyeyed children will soon perk up at the sight of elephants drinking at tranquil Kabini Lake and on a drive deep into the jungle to spot leopards, wild boar and perhaps even the fiery stripes of a prowling tiger. In the coffee plantations up on the green hills at Ooty, where langur monkeys swing in the banyan trees and the land is dotted with the bent backs of tea and coffee pickers, hop aboard the blue Nilgiri mountain train. Descending into the Nilgiri Valley, the scenery unfolds with silver oaks, orange tulips and cascading waterfalls. At every platform stop vendors thrust fresh mangoes and roasted sweetcorn through the windows. In Cochin, look on as the Chinese fishing nets are lowered into the vermilion sea at sunset before watching a Kathakali dance act and dining on yellow snapper and tuna. There's more fishing in Alleppey, the hub of the backwaters, where the highlight is a night on a traditional rice barge gliding over the Pamba River, past wooden canoes and villagers on the banks. This trip is about being immersed in the culture and nothing does it better than a homestay on the final night. At Dewalokam, a working farm and rubber plantation set among banana and pineapple groves, children can drift down the rushing Kannadipuzha River on a bamboo raft, bathe in the freshwater pool and cycle to the village school with their gaggle of new friends. This is the real India: unforgettable and utterly magical.

JOURNEY TIME A nine-and-a half-hour flight from London to Bangalore then a one-hour flight to Mysore.

TIME DIFFERENCE +5.5 hours

INSIDER TIP Don't miss Ooty's famed buns and cakes – a revelation for young tastebuds. BOOK IT Audley (+44 1993 838300; www.audleytravel.com) offers 14-day tailor-made trips to Kerala from £8,760 for two adults and one child, including flights.

## Salling the mekong

This new route from Agua Expeditions, the company that has already made a name for itself with its Amazon programme, is a smart way to open curious eyes to life on the mighty Mekong. The three-night trip, which starts at Phnom Penh in Cambodia and finishes near Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, is a great start for children aged seven and upwards (there are also four- and seven-night options). The boat, Aqua Mekong, is sleek, with 20 spacious teak cabins, many interconnecting and all with floor-to-ceiling windows so you can watch from your bed as the world floats serenely past. Twice a day, knowledgeable guides Nguyen Yee, Hout Hoeum and Duc Tuyen will take you on to dry land for tuk-tuk rides through tiny, off-the-radar villages to markets where you can taste hairy rambutans and juicy mangosteens and suck strips of the sugar cane that's sold on every corner. There are speedboat trips through narrow waterways lined with verdant paddy fields, Buddhist temples in which to be blessed and monkey bridges to climb over. Everywhere you go, amid the roar of scooters, children smile or dance in vivid costumes, eyelashes batting in time to the drum beats. Back on board, a brilliant floating kitchen with a menu overseen by executive chef David Thompson, of Nahm restaurant fame, delivers delicacies such as grilled banana-blossom salad or pork, prawn and ginger on betel leaves for dinner (picky eaters wanting something less spicy can request hamburgers or fish fingers). Children will spend hours playing table football in the games room - giving you time to take a dip in the pool on deck - then you can all kick back together with a nightly film screening against the backdrop of stars. This is a bonding trip for those wanting all the adventure without any of the fuss. JOURNEY TIME A 13-and-a-half-hour flight from London to Phnom Penh via Bangkok

INSIDER TIP Allow time before and after the trip to explore. In Phnom Penh, take teens to visit the Killing Fields and learn about this tragic chapter of

Khmer history; in Ho Chi Minh City, teach them how

to haggle at Ben Thanh market.

TIME DIFFERENCE +7 hours

BOOK IT Cazenove+Loyd (+44 20 7384 2332; www. cazloyd.com) offers a six-night trip from £12,650 based on a family of four, including three nights full board on Aqua Mekong with excursions, one night at Raffles Hotel Le Royal Phnom Penh, one night at the Caravelle Saigon and one night at the Metropolitan by COMO, Bangkok, all with breakfast, British Airways flights and transfers.



PHOTOGRAPHS: JAMES BEDFORD; RICHARD TAYLOR/4 CORNERS



# Heaven in HALKIDIKI

2015 sees the launch of Ikos Resorts with the opening of two five-star Greek properties which will redefine luxury all-inclusive family holidays

here has been much anticipation about the soonto-open Ikos Resorts in Greece. Ikos Oceania in the Halkidiki (formerly Oceania Club) will be the first opening (officially on March 27), closely followed by its Halkidiki twin, Ikos Olivia on May 1, with further Mediterranean properties also in the pipeline. Ikos Resorts' aim is to give five-star leisure travellers a new all-inclusive experience, one based on luxury lifestyle. They have kept the convenience and affordability of the all-inclusive concept but added exclusivity, bespoke services and flexibility. Key Ikos traits include quality, breadth of options, authenticity, elegance, personal service and giving back to the local community. We never say no to more family options (especially five-star short-haul ones), and both these resorts look set for success.

Ikos Oceania nestles in the heart of Halkidiki with a backdrop of Mount Olympus and the sparkling Mediterranean Sea as its front garden. Extensive landscaped grounds cascade down to a private 350 metre-long beach. There is a seemingly infinite array of activities, a good variety of à la carte restaurants (all included) and comprehensive childcare options. An easy-going resort, Ikos Oceania will no doubt become a firm family favourite. But totally new to the Greek travel map is the stunning Ikos Olivia. Its exclusive location on the Gulf of Toroneos immediately pricked up our ears, and they have delivered on every level. Hidden away amid 22 acres of ancient olive trees and fragrant firs, this contemporary masterpiece is Greek chic at its very best. From the shade of the trees, manicured lawns open out and meander down to meet powder-soft sands and the refreshing Aegean Sea. We love the resort's design: fresh, modern and effortlessly sophisticated.

True to Ikos Resorts' vision, Ikos Olivia is an all-inclusive, all-encompassing resort. The facilities are a family's dream-come-true. There are water sports galore, tennis, beach volleyball and huge pools (adults will particularly like the lagoon pool with swim-up bar). They'll also be pleased to hear that childcare covers tots to teens and comes courtesy of UK qualified nursery staff. The food is set to be



Clockwise from top: The beach at Ikos Olivia in Halkidiki; Panorama Junior Suite at Ikos Olivia; View of the pool at Ikos Oceania; Poolside service at Ikos Resorts



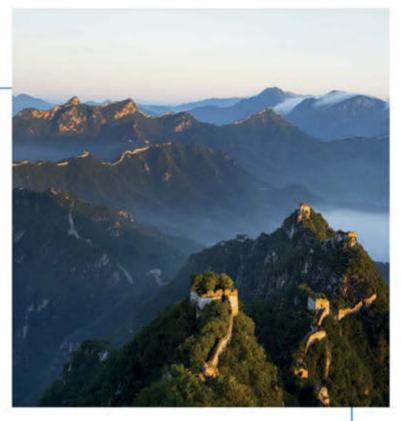


outstanding with many of the menus created by Michelin-starred chefs including Lefteris Lazarou from Athens' Varoulko and Andrea Fusco from Guido Ballerina in Rome. Restaurants specialise in Greek, Italian, Asian and French dishes and there are Ikos sommeliers on hand to advise on a vast selection offine wine. Adults needing 100 percent R&R will no doubt commandeer the all-day beach waiter service, 24-hour room service and spa that concentrates on made-to-measure treatments using exclusive Parisian brand Anne Semonin. Both resorts are set to be brilliant beach experiences and the luxury all-inclusive nature makes them doubly attractive. Halkidiki here we come...

For further information visit ikosresorts.com ot call 0808 111 0131.

#### DISCOVERING (HINA

Save China for teenagers. Few places are as safe, surreal and completely surprising at every turn, so even they can't fail to be impressed. Bookmark a trip with strategic stops at three big hitters - Beijing, Xi'an, Shanghai - followed by time to unwind in the forests of Moganshan. The must-see landmarks in Beijing are, of course, Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall, all of which go way beyond expectations, especially the latter, a 8,850km-long structure that snakes into the distance and renders everyone into awe-struck silence. But the less obvious sights are just as memorable. Take a private tour of artists' studios in the 798 art district, sign up for t'ai chi in the Temple of Heaven Park with Master Liu (he can reduce strapping teens to a heap on the floor with just his little finger): one group waves swords about in slow motion, another practises jianzi (kicking shuttlecocks) as a form of exercise. Next, fly to Xi'an to see the burial home of the Terracotta Warriors: it's extraordinary in scale and ambition, much like the vast city itself. The brilliant concierge at the former People's Hotel, now the Sofitel, will have you off pedalling tandems along the city walls and slurping the best speciality noodles. But nowhere is transforming at more breakneck speed than Shanghai, where futuristic skyscrapers crowd next to incense-filled temples. Haggle at market stalls and zoom around the French Quarter in a 1950s motorcycle sidecar, waving at giggling locals as you pass. After all that high-octane action, retreat to Le Passage in Moganshan, which almost feels more like rural France than China, with its Provençal furniture, excellent wine cellar and cooking school. It's just the breathtaking tea-plantation views and the hundreds of pictures of Buddhas on your 16-year-old's Instagram account that give it away. JOURNEY TIME An 11-hour flight to Beijing **TIME DIFFERENCE +8 hours** 



INSIDER TIP Bespoke Beijing (www.bespoke-beijing.com) can organise everything from a local guide who knows the first emperor's armour size to the best street-stall-snack tours.

BOOK IT Cleveland Collection (+44 20 7843 3531; www. clevelandcollection.co.uk) offers a nine-night trip from £2,579 per adult and £1,139 per child based on a family of four, including three nights each at The St Regis Beijing, Shangri-La Hotel, Xian and

Sofitel Shanghai Hyland, all with breakfast, flights and transfers.

## ROAD TRIPPING IN THE USA

The American road trip will not disappoint. You will not remember how dirty the children got; you will not recall that you nearly reversed the RV off a cliff, knocking a coffee pot all over the little ones; you will not reminisce on how crazy your husband became, shouting at the satnav as if contained of the devil and all hell besides. The sheer wide-open, big-sky, poppy-littered prairie beauty and bear-infested brilliance of the place gets right under the skin and runs with it. Here a coyote, over there the world's largest floating bridge, suddenly the

smart puff of Old Faithful, then the wide-format extravaganza of Yellowstone, finally twilight bonfires and new friends and hot marshmallows burnt to a sticky crisp. The dramatic scene change in the USA should not be underestimated. It is so often an empty place in which nature unyields its most ferocious genius. Children transform into brave pioneers, adventurers, outdoorsmen, wood-collectors, butterfly catchers, adrenalin junkies. Travel with a proper outfit like Brown + Hudson and a whole next level gets delivered: chefs to take the kids foraging in the woods; a quick detour to an absurd water park with rollercoasters and Slurpees the size

of buckets; and guides to take the whole team camping, white-water rafting and fishing. Sticking to the RV trail is perfect in itself – the USA is just set up for it with campsites at every turn – but it's also possible to mix in cheeky, super-smart stays at serious lodges and glamping sites where there are Martinis in chilled glasses, massages in tents and handsome horses that seem like they belong to Apache Indians. Look out especially for Paws Up, The Ranch at Rock Creek and Amangani. For a first trip to the Pacific Northwest, 1,144 miles across

Washington, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming is a sucker punch: truly trip-of-a-lifetime stuff.

JOURNEY TIME A 10-hour flight to Seattle

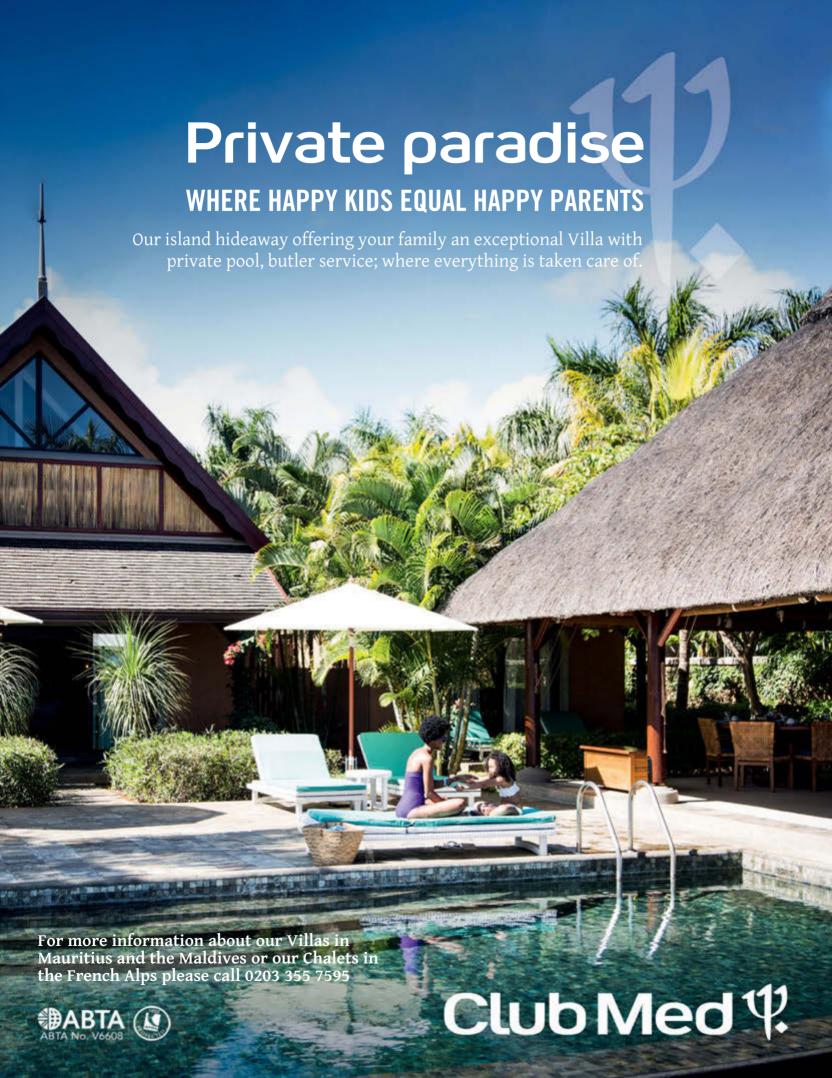
TIME DIFFERENCE +8 hours

INSIDER TIP Get into the RV community by chatting to other happy campers. You never know who you might meet.

BOOK IT Brown + Hudson

(+44 20 3358 0110; www.brown andhudson.com) offers a two-week trip for £30,000 full board based on two adults and two children, including stays at Paws Up, The Ranch at Rock Creek, Riverside State Park, Bridge Bay Park and Amangani, RV hire, all activities and camping fees.









# FAMILY

# ONE & ONLY REETHI RAH MADIVES

The Maldives might seem like they're more suitable for honeymooners than hollering children, but when it comes to families, this place has it nailed. Yes, you'll have to brace yourself for the 10-hour flight, but once that's out of the way, it's all blue skies, crystal-clear waters and breezy island living. There's a surprising amount to keep everyone beaming on this pristine, white-sand utopia. The KidsOnly club for four- to nine-year-olds has a jam-packed itinerary, from crab hunting to coconut painting. Sushi making, jewellery and henna-tattoo sessions, and bananaboat rides at the OneTribe club on the beach should keep the older children busy, and teens can have tennis lessons with a pro and hang out at their own ClubOne outdoor bar sipping smoothies. Meanwhile, parents can cycle along palm-shaded, sandy paths to the Beach Club to soak up Ibiza-inspired beats and tuck into plump grilled prawns the size of fists for lunch (it's next door to the KidsOnly club so you can pop in to check that little ones are polishing off their toasted sandwiches or penne pasta with chicken). Plus, the blownup slides in the sea are perfect for big-kid dads in need of distraction. Grandparents might try painting with the artist in resident or taking a speedboat to the South Atoll to swim with gentle-giant whale sharks. Opt for one of the beach villas, which are surrounded by greenery and have their own stretch of beach - great for children building sandcastles without disturbing anyone. Each one is a personal palace of Malaysian-influenced mahogany and teak, with a separate dining and sitting room, outdoor pool and shady decks for snoozing. Laundry is free for under-twos - such a help when it comes to lighter packing. At night, book a babysitter for toddlers and send the older kids off to movie night so you can treat grandparents to tempura bites at the fairy-tale overwater Japanese restaurant Tapasake.

JOURNEY TIME A 10-hour flight from London to Malé then a one-hour boat transfer TIME DIFFERENCE +5 hours

**INSIDER TIP** Children will love swimming with turtles by the reef. The marine biologist and team have named those they see regularly, so they can keep track of these inquisitive creatures of the deep.

BOOK IT Cleveland Collection (+44 20 7843 3531; www.clevelandcollection.co.uk) offers seven nights from £2,759 per adult and £1,279 per child staying half board in a Beach Villa, including flights and transfers.



Soneva KIRI THAILAND

From the minute your boat lands at the dock here, the fun begins. Children are greeted by someone from The Den (this was Scott Dunn's only kids' club outside Europe until it opened at Niyama in the Maldives this month). It's brilliantly run, with English-speaking nannies and teachers, plus lovely Thai assistants who hand children a personalised programme of what's on that week, from snorkelling lessons to arts and crafts. The club is divided into age-specific groups; there's a separate Eco Den for 12 months to five years with a sleeping room for nap time, Intrepid Explorers for ages five to 12 and activities for teenagers. The main hub is an extraordinary manta-ray-shaped structure. For freed-up adults with time on their hands, there's a Six Senses spa, yoga and ta'i chi, and games of bridge and Scrabble on day beds after lunch on the sand at The Beach restaurant (wood-fired pizzas; delicious salads). The sea is bliss: as warm as a bath, incredibly calm and with no scratchy coral or jellyfish so you don't have to fret about your four-year-old wading around on their own. Anyone with a sweet tooth will love helping themselves in the chocolate room or ice-cream parlour (the bubble-gum flavour is sublime). All food is half price for children; they can choose from their own menu at any of the three restaurants but no one will bat an eyelid if you order an adult's portion of spaghetti and split it between two. Evenings are for family time, winding down by watching movies at the outdoor Cinema Paradiso.

JOURNEY TIME A 12-hour flight from London to Bangkok, a one-hour flight to Koh Kood and then a five-minute boat transfer

TIME DIFFERENCE +7 hours

INSIDER TIP The jet lag is tough, particularly on the way back, so leave a week between returning and sending the children back to school.

BOOK IT Scott Dunn (+44 20 8682 5060; www.scottdunn.com) offers seven nights from £6,195, based on a family of four sharing, including breakfast, flights with Thai Airways, transfers and daily access to the Explorers Club.

#### BORGO EGNAJA ITA

This turbo-charged set-up takes the frazzle out of family time. Although it only opened five years ago, the majestic masseria surrounded by olive groves looks as if it has been part of the landscape for centuries with pockmarked limestone set against the red earth and Yves Klein-blue sky. The hotel is arranged like a village around a square, with a handful of restaurants, and indoor and outdoor pools. It's en point and utterly chic. All ages will find plenty to do, from children (there's a kids' club for eight months to 16 years) to grandparents (cultural tours to see the region's hobbit-like trulli houses). Everyone will love Da Puccetta, a dedicated section in one of the restaurants serving prosciutto and mozzarella followed by baby meatballs. Reserve a two- or three- bedroom townhouse with wafty linen curtains in the handsome cream sitting room, a kitchen with a coffee machine and a bougainvillaea-filled courtyard. A housekeeper comes in to tidy up the clutter twice a day and the biggest villas also come with a swimming pool, cinema room and private chef. Sign little ones up for cookery classes or cycle with them to a local farm, leaving teens behind to hang out at the private beach club. The beauty of being on holiday with those who need an afternoon nap (at both ends of the age spectrum) is that you can sneak off to the heavenly candle-lit spa. Avoid the August stampede and book instead for May half-term, when it's hot enough to swim in the sea but still cool enough to be out in the midday sun. JOURNEY TIME A three-hour flight from London to Brindisi then a 45-minute drive TIME DIFFERENCE +1 hour **INSIDER TIP** Leave the kids with the grandparents and go up the coast to the stunning town of Polignano a Mare on the hotel's converted fisherman's boat. BOOK IT Carrier (+44 1614 921357; www. carrier.co.uk) offers five nights from £4,195 per

family, based on two adults and one child sharing a La Corte Splendida room, including breakfast, flights from Gatwick and transfers.





# FOUR SEASONS SHARM E SHEIKH

The famous Four Seasons full-wattage service hits you as soon as you land at the airport. Whizz through fast-track passport control and get ushered into cars for the 10-minute drive through shimmering sand dunes. Zoom up the swanky palm-lined drive and the hotel appears like a pretty Arab-lite village, with trickling fountains and acres of impossibly emerald lawns leading down the hill towards the glinting Red Sea. For big families there are four-bedroom villas, each with a useful kitchen (the washing machine and dryer are a godsend), a pool and outdoor terraces set in lush gardens. If walking is a struggle for young and old there's a platoon of buggies and a little train, which conveniently halts beside the ice-cream stand en route to the beach. Here, it's all about the underwater world. The hotel's house reef, with cheeky clownfish and elegant angelfish, provides a gentle taster of snorkelling and diving for all ages. But the real honeypot for experienced divers lies a boat trip away at Tiran Island or Ras Mohammed National Park, where they might catch a glimpse of a whale shark or leopard shark. Action on dry land is pretty perky, too: the Kids for All Seasons programme delivers age-specific daily activities, including cake decorating, making clay volcanoes erupt and playing at pirates. Emo shade-seeking teens can gather at the Young Adult Social Centre which, despite the name, has it all: billiards, table tennis and console games. There are also three tennis courts, dodge ball, the beach where patrolling pool boys serve fresh mangoes, and, for grown-ups, a full-throttle spa and wellness centre with hardcore Technogym equipment and relaxing yoga. The four swimming pools are on a sliding scale of splashiness from the kids' Aladdin pool to the sleek adult-only lap pool. Although there are five restaurants, the food isn't overly ambitious. However, once little ones are sound asleep in bed, nothing beats a plate piled with mezze, a shisha pipe and a hip-wiggling belly dancer at the open-air Nafoura Lounge on a warm starry night. JOURNEY TIME A five-hour flight from London then a 10-minute transfer

TIME DIFFERENCE+2 hours

INSIDER TIP It's a bagsy type of place, so get ready to stake a claim on your favourite beach or pool spot quick smart and book dinner in advance.

**BOOK IT** Hayes & Jarvis (+44 1293 735831; www.hayes andjarvis.com) offers seven nights from £3,799 for a family of four, including breakfast, flights and transfers.

#### ANASSA CUPRUS

Great for a mid-haul sunshine fix (the flight is less than five hours and it's already hot at Easter), this hotel is set in 14 acres of lush lawns with lavender-scented paths above the blue waters of Chrysochou Bay. There are grand cupolas and acres of marble it isn't short on sophisticated elegance - but thankfully it's not the kind of place where you'll be frowned upon for padding about in a robe and slippers either. Many of the 166 rooms and suites, which are decorated in creamy tones and filled with antiques, have interconnecting doors so it's ideal for extended families to spread out and give grandparents the space they need. In fact, it's a grown-up heaven with Scott Dunn nannies thrown in (leave the kids with brilliant teachers for a few hours, an evening or the whole day), making group get-togethers stress-free rather than something to be endured through gritted teeth and lashings of rosé. Even packing is a doddle, as the hotel offers a Baby Go Lightly service, providing essentials including nappies, baby food, high chairs, baby walkers and bottle warmers. The Explorers Club is age-graded and is for everyone from drooling four-month-olds whose bottles will be prepared in the milk kitchen to energetic under-nines wanting to play rounders on the beach and teens who can escape from parental nagging at the graffitied hangout. Once children are busy, happy and safe, grown-ups can spend time playing tennis, having an Ila spa treatment or lolling on one of the beachside sunbeds. The whole family will want to get involved in watersports, which include paddle-boarding, banana rides, jet-skiing and PADI diving lessons (there's diving for over-10s, too), or pile into a four-wheel-drive for a safari day out at Akamas National Park. With five restaurants, even the trickiest eaters will be happy: tea-time pasta and pesto for toddlers at Amphora; soft-shell crab for a romantic dinner at Basiliko; and moussaka and wagyu beef at alfresco Pelagos. JOURNEY TIME A four-and-a-half-hour flight from London

then a one-hour transfer

TIME DIFFERENCE +2 hours

**INSIDER TIP** Take a picnic and explore the extraordinary ruins and gladiator mosaics at Kourion, near Episkopi Bay on the southern coast, which date from the fifth century.

BOOK IT Scott Dunn (+44 20 8682 5040; www.scottdunn.com) offers seven nights from £4,950, based on a family of four staying half board in interconnecting studio suites, including flights, transfers and two places in the Explorers Club.





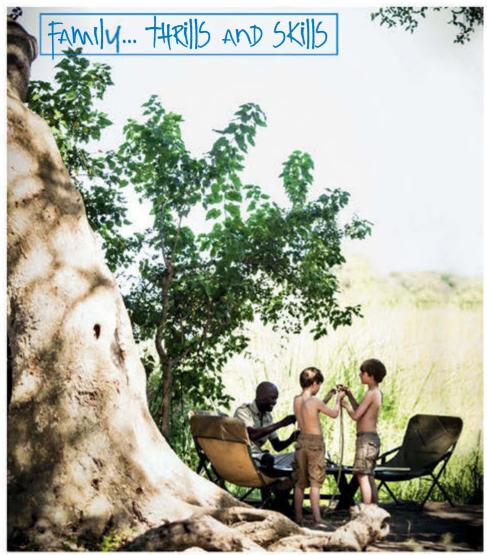


# FAMILY

## Clayoquot Canada

It is, let's be up front, expensive. But it is also arguably the best wilderness outfit in the world for families. On the Pacific coast of Vancouver Island there is nothing but armies of thick pines stretching as far as the eye can see, clear waters running through it full of fat fish, and big brown bears padding around in meadows. Occasionally - stay stock-still - a cougar. The tone of the place (because it is in Canada rather than the USA, where health-andsafety rules are much stricter), is remarkably relaxed. Tiny toddlers get scooped up by cowgirls on horseback and race across rushing rivers and through huckleberry bushes without even wearing a hat. Motorboats ride up and down on crazy swells chasing pods of whales as little ones cling to the sides and the sea splash soaks them to the core. It is thrilling adventure, a bolt of animal-kingdom wildness that seems to have no limit. Every day there are new challenges: paddle-boarding, zip-lining, kayaking, mountaineering, climbing a tree so fat and tall it's like Jack's beanstalk. Oh look, an otter licking its paws. Over there, a fish eagle focusing on its prey. What Clayoquot does so well is ride the line between proper camping - serious tents overlooking laughing brooks, gorgeous frontier furniture - and kick-ass back-up. There are proper bathrooms, proper chefs who dish up amazing feasts, proper masseurs. It is smart in both senses of the word. Within 24 hours the children here become like a swarm, running around in gangs and whittling wood and eating s'mores and making fires while shedding their city preciousness and blossoming and blooming in a totally outrageous outdoor wonderworld. **JOURNEY TIME** A nine-and-a-half-hour flight to Vancouver, then a 45-minute flight to Tofino **TIME DIFFERENCE** -8 hours **INSIDER TIP** If you're looking for an unbridled, invigorating trip that is both totally wild and brilliantly five-star, this is the place to do it. **BOOK IT** Brown & Hudson (+44 20 3350 0110; www.brownandhudson.com) offers seven nights

in a Luxury Ensuite Tent for two adults and two children under 12 from £14,975, including all meals, drinks and activities plus seaplane transfers.



(AMP) Bots Wana

What children want in Africa is a bit of an adventure. They don't want to spend all their time sitting silently in a four-wheel-drive, no matter how splendid the game or how ravishing the birds. Which is where Ker & Downey's Young Explorers programme, based at Footsteps Camp near Shinde in Botswana's Okavango Delta, comes up trumps. Here, in a reassuringly simple camp under some jackalberry trees, are three dark-green canvas tents with all the trappings (including flushing loos) that spoilt young things are used to, yet rustic enough to remind them of what bush life might have been like for explorers in the past. With only six beds, the camp is designed to be taken over by a single family or one group of friends at a time (children aged seven and upwards are welcome). Out of the kitchen comes the sort of familiar, comforting food everyone wants: roast chicken, lasagne or spaghetti bolognese, followed by ice cream. But while all that is part of the charm, what really makes the camp special is Paul Moleseng, the Botswana-born guide who runs it. He is every child's dream companion - jokey and fun yet a great leader and mentor. He not only knows every inch of the terrain around the camp - where the cheetah is hiding her cubs, the name of each bird and insect that flutters by - he also teaches his young charges key survival skills: how to track a lion by following its roar; how to fish for bream or tilapia in the big lagoons; and the trick to building a fire with nothing more than sticks and stones. He instils in them the laws of the land: that patience is required, and discipline too, for the quietest spot can suddenly erupt into danger. In the heat of the afternoon, as adults and animals slumber in the cool of the shade, he'll organise football matches using elephant dung for goalposts, or set rifle-shooting challenges with a row of tin cans. Through all the larking around, young ones subliminally learn why preserving the bush and all its inhabitants really matters and begin to understand something of the sheer, heart-thumping joy the natural world has to offer.

JOURNEY TIME An 11-hour flight to Johannesburg, then a 25-minute light-aircraft trip TIME DIFFERENCE +2 hours

INSIDER TIP Take a suitcase big enough for the bow and arrows that Moleseng will help the children make. Otherwise you will lose them at airport security and tears will flow. BOOK IT Africa Travel (+44 20 7843 3591; www.africatravel.com) offers a six-night trip, from £15,500, based on two adults and two children under 12, including three nights on the Young Explorers' safari, all meals, flights, transfers, park fees and game activities.

#### GREEN (AMP BALL

In the hills not far from Ubud, the Green School caused a global stir when it first opened seven years ago to give children a private, holistic education with a sustainable bent. But if you don't want to take a sabbatical and uproot your entire clan to Bali, the alternative is a stint at Green Camp - an off-the-beaten-track, back-to-basics bonding experience with the same eco ethos. The threeor five-day Family Green Adventures (there are also kids-only camps for ages eight to 18) are suitable for children aged five and over. Each family has one of the bamboo-and-thatch yurts (with bunk beds, outdoor showers and shared compost loos) arranged around the organic gardens and campfire. From the second you arrive, iPods and phones are forgotten in the excitement of all the fun, nature-based activities. Younger ones might have a lesson on recycling and waste that involves building a bamboo raft and taking it out on the waterways to collect plastic rubbish; or they can learn about the importance of coconuts as a resource by using them to do arts and crafts or even by climbing a tree. There's also kite-flying, laughing yoga and take-home skills such as making natural dyes and creating chocolate from cacao beans harvested on site. Community is key - most of the staff are local and really bring the camp to life - and it's not just about bringing you closer as a family, but making new friends too. After a packed day, evenings are delightfully unhurried: help yourself to spiced chicken with turmericinfused rice from the buffet and gather around the campfire to toast corn on a stick (best of all is the farewell lunch, usually a traditional Megibung banquet served on banana leaves and eaten with your hands). Don't send anyone off to bed before the evening's entertainment: shadow puppet theatre, or a chance to have a go at the martial art of Mepantigan in the mud pit.

JOURNEY TIME A 17-hour flight via Singapore, then a 45-minute transfer

**TIME DIFFERENCE +8 hours INSIDER TIP** Bring a torch for a guided night safari around the property on the lookout for lizards, giant moths and other curious critters. **BOOK IT** www.greencampbali.com. From about £380 for a three-day Family Green Adventure based on two adults and two children under 12,

including all meals and activities.





Turquoise Holidays has a hard-to-beat family travel portfolio as well as a contagious can-do attitude. Here's what's hot for 2015 in Thailand

Talking travelling with Turquoise you can't help but be inspired by their anything-is-possible outlook. We know adventuring doesn't have to end at childbirth, we think every globetrotter should pick the team's family travel orientated brains. It comes as no surprise that Turquoise Holidays is family owned and run with the majority of the team deep in parenthood. They understand what it is like to travel with children and all the properties in the family portfolio have been handpicked with both adults and little ones in mind. This year the team is buzzing about Thailand: its natural beauty and delicious food give it all-round appeal but for families, it's safe, easy to travel and brilliantly accessible with numerous flight routes. We've picked two familyfriendly itineraries that encapsulate the best of Thailand. But being 100 percent tailor-made, means that your wish is Turquoise's command. And they love a challenge far from the norm.





#### THAI ADVENTURE ONE: SOUTHERN BEACH AND JUNGLE SAFARI

This begins at Phuket's wonderfully quirky Indigo Pearl Resort, perfect for early holiday R&R. The suites are easily large enough for four, there's a fantastic water sports centre and a brilliant kids club. From here, a three-hour drive takes you deep into the rainforest of Khao Sok National Park to a luxury tented camp. This is an outdoor adventure like no other where guests can get up close with elephants, go jungle trekking, cruise lakes and look for monkeys while canoeing down the Sok river. Final stop Krabi, and the idyllic Rayavadee, where white sand and emerald water create a truly tropical finale. Complimentary activities for children run daily and include everything from Thai cookery lessons and batik painting to cave walks.

#### Take us there

This two-week family holiday includes six nights B&B at Indigo Pearl, two nights full board at Elephant Hills and six nights B&B at Rayavadee, from £6,875 per family. Price includes flights, transfers and is based on two adults and two children under 12.

#### NORTHERN ADVENTURE, JUNGLE & BEACH

#### Take us there







## Family... HRills and Skills

## Wolgan Valley australia

This is a quintessentially Australian bush experience for those who don't want to rough it. About 170km from Sydney, Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley is in a 2,800-hectare wildlife reserve between two national parks in the Greater Blue Mountains, a wonderland of rolling hills and Wollemi trees, kangaroos and wallabies. It's family-friendly but in a discreet, understated way. Accommodation is in elegant, Federation-style villas, each with a double-sided fireplace, swimming pool and deck. Instead of a standard kids' club, there are Rangers activities designed to get little ones loving and learning about the great outdoors. They can be taught bush survival skills, navigation basics and how to identify wallaroos and kookaburras, and go on adventure hikes - tailored to different ages and abilities - in search of wombats and joeys. Field guides will also take them on nature walks to collect leaves and flowers, then help to create collages with their finds, or they'll crack open rocks to reveal fossilised plant imprints from ancient swamps. The 19 horses here are gentle enough for nervous or first-time riders and may be among the world's most overindulged creatures (they have their own masseuse); under-fives can take a tour of the stables and help with feeding. But it's as the sun goes down and the wildlife becomes more active that the place really comes alive. Get the gang together for a four-wheeldrive tour that sets off an hour before sunset. As you explore the vast landscape, a guide holds everyone's attention with fascinating animal facts; but be warned – the paths are bumpy, so leave babies and toddlers behind with a drawer full of colouring pencils and drawing pads to keep them amused. The Wolgan Dining Room - with breathtaking views, sparkling crystal and smooth linen tablecloths - has a mouthwatering children's menu, but if Kanimbla Valley lamb cutlets with greens and mash don't do the trick, the chefs will whip up fussy eaters' favourite meals within minutes. Later, board games and DVDs are available on request for pre-bedtime entertainment.

JOURNEY TIME A 22-hour flight to Sydney, then a two-and-a-half-hour drive TIME DIFFERENCE +11 hours

INSIDER TIP The Rangers programmes run during the New South Wales school holidays (in January, April, late June, July, September, early October and December). Outside these times, the same activities can be arranged privately but at extra cost. BOOK IT Carrier (+44 161 492 1355; www.carrier.co.uk) offers three nights at Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley from £14,700 for a family of three, all-inclusive. This can be booked as part of a tailor-made tour of New South Wales.





## langtham Place NEW YORK

Here at Langham Place (sister of the Langham in London) is where kids and culture meet in a cool. urban, arty environment. On Fifth Avenue in the heart of midtown, it's the perfect spot for parents wanting to add gallery-scene buzz to a family stay in the Big Apple, thanks to the Little Collectors programme. The Morgan Library and Museum is on the doorstep and the Museum of Modern Art and the American Folk Art Museum are both less than a half-hour stroll away (just the right distance for burning off Tiggerish amounts of energy). Best of all, for a small fee the hotel will arrange a brilliantly entertaining, private, one-hour tour of a top Chelsea art gallery - the Gagosian or Pace, say - led by a professional guide. Beware: you'll probably be tempted to buy a painting or two and it can become expensive; but it's worth it when children return home knowing their Jeff Koons from their Howard Hodgkins. Afterwards, head back to the hotel for dinner at Michael White's Michelin-starred Mediterranean restaurant. Ai Fiori. where staff will happily do a kitchen show-around for budding cooks keen to watch the chefs at work. As going-home presents, kids get a framed, limited-edition print by photographer David Levinthal and a signed copy of his book Who Pushed Humpty Dumpty? as well as a travel-size Etch-a-Sketch, ideal for scribbled sketches of the Empire State or the Chrysler Building; either of these will be visible from the windows of your one- or two-bedroom family suite depending on which side of the hotel it's on. A handy New York address to have up your sleeve.

JOURNEY TIME A seven-and-a-half hour flight to New York, then a 40-minute transfer TIME DIFFERENCE -5 hours

**INSIDER TIP** The hotel can arrange queuejumping tickets for the Empire State Building's 86th-floor observation deck.

BOOK IT +1 212 695 4005; www.langhamhotels. com. From about £500 for a family suite and the Little Collectors package











# Looking for a Summer Holiday with a difference?

Abseiling adventures down waterfalls, mountain biking tropical trails, running through Pigeon Island's historic ruins then kayaking to the BodyHoliday beach – it's all part of the BodyHoliday Quadrathlon, just one of the challenges you and your family can enjoy together next summer. Join us on the beautiful island of Saint Lucia – the Caribbean's number one award winning holiday of well being and choose from a wealth of activities that have been put together for your WellFit® Families experience. To find out more about this exceptional family holiday please call 0203 096 1608 or visit www.thebodyholiday.com/wff















Clockwise from opposite top left: Hammock overlooking Serenity Beach; Birds eye view of Hillside Beach Club; View from a superior double room with large terrace; Floating pontoons at the tranquil Silent Beach

ust around the coast from **Fethiye** in the emerald green arc of Kalemya Bay in Turkey, **Hillside Beach Club** has found the perfect recipe for a luxury holiday in the Med. What makes this beach retreat so unique is that it somehow manages to cater for absolutely everyone. Families, couples, spa goers and groups of friends all rave about its rooms, facilities, food, vibe and service. We check out the secret of its all-round success.

First up, a new direct British Airways flight between London Gatwick and Dalaman in southern Turkey launches this year, making Hillside Beach Club even more accessible. Open from mid-April to the very end of October, this is short-haul sun within easy reach. The club is just an hour's car transfer from Dalaman, but feels a world away. Set in its own private bay backed by pine-clad hills and fronted by crystal clear turquoise waters, it is an area of outstanding natural beauty where guests can exclusively enjoy the very best of coastal Turkey.

Brilliant on-site facilities have given Hillside the family wow factor. There is a mind-blowing amount of organised action on the doorstep run by three different children's clubs. Kidside entertains everyone between four and seven with a lot of sports on land and water, two dedicated swimming pools (with waterslides) and an excellent craft and games area. The slightly older children (eight to 12) can try anything from sailing and football tournaments to table tennis and hip hop classes courtesy of Junior Club, while Young Club caters for teenage guests with masses of options ranging from beach volleyball and watersports to learning to DJ, dancing, chilling out in the jacuzzi and beach movie nights. Active adults will also love Hillside Beach Club's strong focus on outdoor adventures. While the watersports facilities are second-to-none and include a superbly kitted-out dive school there are also excursions galore including trekking, mountain biking, riding, fishing and off-road jeep safaris. Back at the club there is a host of classes from tennis, zumba and Latin dance to pilates and yoga.

But if you've flown to flop à deux, fear not. Couple escapism comes easy at the two adult-only beaches – Silent Beach with its no mobile phone policy and Serenity Beach reached via a half-mile forest path. Both are idyllic spots in which to relax in peace: places to take time-out, breathe in the heady scent of pine, listen to the chatter of cicadas and feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. Rest is of the essence here particularly now you can order cocktails to the loungers using their complimentary Beach Order App. Whether your preferred tipple is a caipirinha, mojito, coconut smoothie or ice cold beer, this dedicated app is a genius addition. Couples also rave about the yoga classes on Silent Beach and the spas (yes, plural). We love Sanda Nature Spa, set up in the hills near Silent Beach. Trees weave in and out of the rooms and all treatments are inspired by nature (think lemon and honey facials and lavender wraps). Just as alluring is the exotic and minimalist Sanda Spa with its vast array of includent treatments including hot stone, crystal and lava shell massages, rubs, wraps, Elemis facials, couples treatments and rituals in the traditional Turkish hammam. For more me-time book a table at Pasha on the Bay, the perfect romantic spot to complete your Turkish time-out.

For further information call 00 90 212 362 3030 or visit hillsidebeachclub.com

# An Aegean ESCAPE



#### **CN TRAVELLER READER EVENT**

Harvey Nichols continues to lead the way in fashion with its always-evolving collection of cutting-edge designer brands. The 2015 spring/summer collection is hotter than ever and so comprehensive it has transformed Harvey Nichols into a one-stop holiday shop. Come and check out some of this summer's key looks and must-have wardrobe edits at the store's brand new Style Concierge Suite. Enjoy a drinks and canapé reception followed by a fashion show and Q&A with Harvey Nichols Group Buying Director, Anita Barr. Beauty, skincare and fragrance demonstrations will follow with more drinks and canapés rounding off this exclusive fashion-focused evening.

#### THE DETAILS

Hillside Beach Club, Harvey Nichols and Condé Nast Traveller invite you to an exclusive evening of fashion, beauty, drinks and canapés

at **Style Concierge,** Third Floor, Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge

on Thursday 26th March 2015 from 6pm to 8.30pm

To book please call 0207 152 3449 or email CNTReaderEvents@condenast.co.uk, tickets are £10 per person

# Kicking Kids' (Jubs

Forget blunt colouring pens and crappy sticker books: these are super-sharp places to get smart

#### SIX SENSES 2944 BAY OMAN

Where can you go in the depths of winter that doesn't require a long-haul flight? Well, this is easy to get to, immensely good looking (sleek villas with private pools), the service is of the butler-withbuggy variety and, best of all, children will be superbly looked after. The whole place is a Middle Eastern wonderland with grazing goats, fig and lemon trees lining sandy paths that you can wander barefoot or by bicycle, vast buffets of the freshest fruits and sizzling mezze, and, ever-present in the background, those mysterious mountains. Chaica's, the kids' club for four-to-12-year-olds, is a riot of salt-dough art, rock painting and beach bowls, but it's the Teen Club that really revs up the thrills with adventure hikes, wadi swimming, canyoning, raft making, archery and Bear Grylls-style survival skills. When you want to gather en masse, sunset cruises into Haffa Bay (where local children take boats to school) or dhow trips with picnics are fun. There are also cinema screenings on the beach with popcorn and incredible homemade ice creams such as rose water, fragrant cinnamon or

saffron and honey. More traditional taste buds will enjoy the mini fish and chips, and maybe a banana split for pudding. Despite all the whizz-bang trimmings (Wi-Fi, private wine cellars), it very much feels like an Omani enclave – colourful, atmospheric and natural. And it's perfectly acceptable to lounge around on floor cushions, playing backgammon before feasting on a whole Shua lamb cooked underground in a sand pit for hours.

JOURNEY TIME A six-hour flight to Dubai then a two-hour drive TIME DIFFERENCE +4 hours

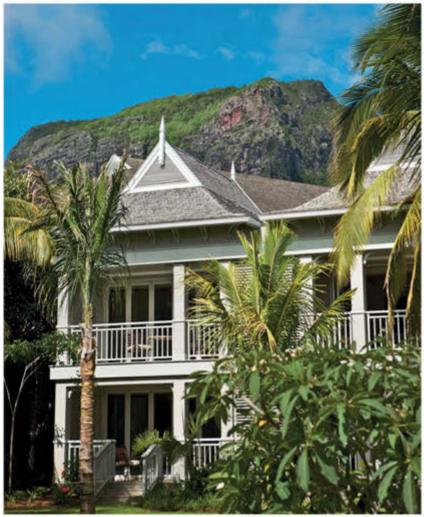
**INSIDER TIP** The spa has the sweetest, stickiest dates, delicious ginger tea and some of the most intuitive therapists anywhere. Try the Indian head massage to release all that neck tension and leave you floating.

**BOOK IT** Cleveland Collection (+44 20 7843 3531; www.cleveland collection.co.uk) offer seven nights at Six Senses Zighy Bay from £1,559 per adult and £279 per child sharing, including flights and transfers.





## Family... Kicking KiDS' (JUBS



## the St REGIS MAURITIUS

Almost all of the five-star resorts on Mauritius have decent kids' clubs and beaches but there's something about the elegance and American-meets-Mauritian friendliness here that lends itself especially well to families. It's on the south-west of the island, so away from the more developed east, but close to sites such as the Seven Coloured Earth, where mud mountains and mating giant tortoises provide an enthralling spectacle. But really this place is about staying put. There's a pool with swinging wicker chairs for dangling your feet into the water, five good restaurants including a haute-Indian that has Atul Kochar at the helm, and an enormous Iridium spa. Plus, once the children discover the Kite Flyers Club, reached by crossing a tiny stream (don't forget to shout 'who's that trip-trapping over my bridge?'), it's unlikely they'll want to leave. The staff are the right balance of energetic and considerate, encouraging timid children away from book-hungry parents with activities ranging from cake-baking to leaf printing. Most brilliant of all, none of this is confined to the kids' club area. From the balcony of your room (ground-floor suites are best), watch as a scraggle of face-painted munchkins romp past in pirate hats following a treasure map. Or get stuck into early-evening gin o'clock while the children happily toast marshmallows by a bonfire on the beach. The sand here is more crunchy than sugar-soft (though the water is glorious for glass-bottom boating), but when you consider the excellent butlers - useful for arranging bottle warmers and picnic-making - and staff happy to whizz toddlers around in golf buggies, first forays into family travel don't come any more effortless than this.

JOURNEY TIME A 12-hour flight then a 75-minute transfer TIME DIFFERENCE +4 hours

**INSIDER TIP** The club is more flexible than the official line suggests. It will happily tweak activities or accept younger children where possible.

BOOK IT Turquoise Holidays (+44 1494 678400; turquoiseholidays.co.uk) offers seven nights in an Ocean View Deluxe Room from £4,799 per family of four, including half-board meals, private transfers and international flights.

#### FOUR SEASONS ORIANDO AT WAIT DISNEY WORLD

The Four Seasons does nothing by halves so its firstever Disney hotel, 15 years in the making and opened last summer, was always going to be sensational. Set on Lake Buena Vista, this 443-room, 17-storey hotel is huge, though positively 'boutique' for Orlando - a destination that many parents would once have tried to avoid at all costs for fear of going totally insane. But this eye-popping, landscaped hotel will change that. For starters, the Kids for All Seasons programme offers real bang for your buck: it takes place on Explorer Island, surrounded by a man-made, snaking river complete with spray cannons, a cascading waterfall and rapids, all navigable in giant plastic inner tubes. There's also a stonking great family pool, a gelateria, the Splash Zone – a cross between Stonehenge and the Temple of Luxor - beach volleyball, shoot hoops and a games centre with X-Box and a huge TV (it may be a comfort for your teenage grunter to at least know they exist). The twice-weekly Disney Cast of Characters breakfast can be torture for adults but the under-10s go nuts, and everyone loves the 'dive-in' movies, watched from the deck on floating pool chairs. Even the smallest guest rooms are actually gigantic - a touch corporate perhaps, but all with proper balconies. When the children are busy, head to the spa with its Everglades-inspired interior (no gators in the treatment rooms, luckily) for a facial, or a round of golf on the Tom Fazio-designed course. And no one's going to go hungry. The rooftop restaurant, Capa, a Spanish-themed steakhouse, is the big splurge, but you can grab a chicken salad from snack bar Lickety-Split and tuck into terrific ravioli or croquettes at Ravello. The Magic Kingdom and Epcot theme parks might be only a few miles away, but chances are children will find this place almost as much fun as Disney itself. JOURNEY TIME A nine-hour flight then a

half-hour drive
TIME DIFFERENCE -5 hours

INSIDER TIP Arrange ahead for the concierge to organise VIP tours of Walt Disney World for express access to the rides so you can beat the queues.

BOOK IT+1 407 313 7777; www.fourseasons.com
Rooms from £610 a night, based on two children and two adults sharing.

















Zakynthos Island, Greece

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## Family... Kicking KiDS' (JUBS

## LE PORTETA COURCHEVE FRANCE

The fact that Le Portetta (sister property to Lime Wood in the New Forest) is the only ski-in, ski-out hotel with a Scott Dunn Mini Explorers kids' club makes it a no-brainer for a fun-filled family snow break. The vibe is incredibly relaxed, so no need to feel embarrassed if anyone has a hissy fit in reception during check-in; sitting rooms are full of well-guarded log fires and huge settle-into sofas robust enough to withstand tiny toddler feet, and an army of professional nannies (English-speaking, smiley) are on hand to help keep everyone in order. If you don't want your day on the slopes interrupted by a food-flinging lunch, then pre-order from the children's menu in the restaurant and they can eat with their new gang of friends. Your dedicated nanny will make sure they get there on time then whisk them off for afternoon crepes in all their kit while you head for the spa or snag a heated seat at the outdoor terrace bar Fire & Ice, which has log fires, flaming torches and fur snugs. And while you catch the first ski lift of the day, your little ones will be unloading a toy box, getting stuck into arts and crafts or joining in a group sing-song. For those old enough to strap on their first pair of boots (age four upwards), several ski schools offer lessons right on the doorstep (there's also a large ski assault course for early learners who haven't made it on to the slopes yet but need to get to grips with the equipment and how the mini lifts work). Book one of the four lodges, a five-minute walk from the main hotel or a mountain-view loft suite, which comes with spacious bunk rooms, kitchenettes ideal if you need to rustle up a quick mid-afternoon snack for hungry mouths - and DVDs and board games for the evenings, when the fresh mountain air means all nippers can manage is a few hours of calm before crashing out.



**JOURNEY TIME** An hour-and-a-half flight to Geneva then a two-hour transfer

TIME DIFFERENCE +1 hour

**INSIDER TIP** If you're staying in a loft suite or lodge, the hotel can arrange a catered dinner (loft three sits up to 10).

BOOK IT Scott Dunn (+44 20 8682 5050; www.scottdunn.com) offers seven nights half-board for £5,950 based on two adults and two children sharing a family room, including flights, transfers and kids' club.

#### THE PELIGONI (JUB GREELE

Set on an untouched coastline on north Zakynthos with crystal-clear waters, this place is brilliant for adrenalin-seeking, sports-mad teens. Peligoni will sort out your villa or apartment (nab one near to the club itself so older children can come and go as they please), then you can spend as much time as you like here – it's a family-run, boho beauty with a crowd that seems to have been scooped up from Salcombe. Reception is a whitewashed wooden hut where the owner's dog Tiko is often stretched out and snoring in the corner, and there are a series of platforms clinging to the rocks for sunbathing. The beach is rocky so those with toddlers tend to stick

to the pool, where loungers are laid-out under the trees. Sailing and windsurfing lessons take place in front of The Love Shack (for unlimited tuition, go for the watersports package; motorised activities such as ringo-ing and waterskiing are extra), and wobbly beginners learning how to balance upright on their boards or hoist up sails can be seen out in the bay. Meanwhile, at the kids' club (officially for ages seven to 12 but younger ones are also welcome) activities range from noisy volleyball sessions in the pool and fast-paced ping-pong tournaments to mocktail making. Send older

ones off for a parent-free boat trip to Alykes village to spend pocket money on a fancy-dress costume for party night – they'll love the feeling of independence. All the staff are young and enthusiastic (mostly university students who spent their own summer holidays here), particularly those in the kids' club who have the knack of gently coercing those less confident to join in – they are regularly named as favourites on post-trip feedback forms. Linger over lunches at the bamboo-shaded restaurant (huge Greek salads, hamburgers for children) and twice a week, there's a BBQ where children sit, divided by age group, at communal tables with their friends. It's a stress-free

set-up that works so well, families get hooked after a single visit and come back year after year. **JOURNEY TIME** Three-anda-half hours to Zakynthos then a 45-minute transfer

TIME DIFFERENCE +2 hours INSIDER TIP Private chefs are available to cook for any numbers in the privacy of your own villa. Feast on crispy duck salad, smoked salmon fillet and raspberry compote.

BOOK IT www.peligoni.com. From £770 for seven nights in a two-bedroom villa, based on two adults and two children, including club membership.



REPORTS BY: CONNIE ALLFREY, JADE BEER, PETER BROWNE, ALICE BRUDENELL-BRUCE, TIM ECOTT, OLIVIA FALCON, DAISY FINER, SACHA FORBES, CLEMMIE HAMBRO, ANNA HART, LYNDSAY HAWDON, GEORDIE GREIG, EMMA LOVE, MARY LUISSIANA, EMILY MATHIESON, SOPHIE PITHER, MELINDA STEVENS, CLOVER STROUD, JEREMY WAYNE, JO WEINBERG, LUCIA VAN DER POST, DILVIN YASA



# OH luxury microcosm of endless choices

The Out of the Blue Capsis Elite Resort is a deluxe resort complex located on a private peninsula surrounded by a luscious Botanical Garden of 167,000 m<sup>2</sup> that captivates your senses with its majestic Aegean views. It is ideally located in the middle of the island, just 20 minutes for the City and the International airport of Heraklion and it offers easy access to the multiple attractions of Crete.

Combining the beauty of the Greek Islands with the utmost of luxury, this resort provides guests a choice of 4 different hotels/concepts with various types of accommodation, from family bungalows to private pool-villas.

The resort is surrounded by ponds, cascades, beaches and at the disposal of guests are, 6 restaurants, 5 bars, luxury all inclusive programs at your choice, 5 swimming pools, an open-air cinema, a water sports and PADI Scuba-Diving Centre, a teenagers club and an amusement park for children. The Capsis Minoan Amusement Park, the only one within a resort in Greece, features educational and interactive games based on Greek myths.

For the utmost elixir sensation the "Euphoria Rejuvenating" Spa proposes a wide range of face and body treatments and personalized detox programs, anti-ageing therapies and weight-loss programs according to the Dukan method. There are also special nutrition programs for kids and adolescents.













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Words and photography: Lee Osborne

# light FANTASTIC



What better way to celebrate the *United Nations International Year of Light* 2015, than visiting Swedish Lapland in search of the Aurora Borealis, armed with the very latest cutting-edge photographic kit from Fujifilm

s the plane makes its descent in to Kiruna, Sweden's northernmost airport, my eyes are transfixed through the cabin window by the inhospitable Arctic landscape of Europe's last wilderness. Seen from up high, it's a barren black and white swarm of trees and snow, an image I can best equate with those intricate nail and thread pictures that were all the rage in the Seventies. It's 3pm, the blast of cold air as we disembark the plane is a sharp reminder we've landed within the Arctic Circle - the mercury

reading dips to -IS as we crunch our way through the snow into the tiny terminal building. As I collect my Fuji photographic kit from the carousel, I spy the sun already dipping below the horizon. It's onwards from here to Icehotel in Jukkasjärvi (pictured above), a 20-minute drive through landscapes only usually reserved for Christmas cards. Literally-speaking, the world-renowned 'holiday on ice' destination celebrates its silver anniversary this year and is our base for the next two nights. Entry to Icehotel, through reindeer skin-covered doors with antler handles, is every bit as impressive as you would imagine. Each year 200 artists apply to create suites within the hallowed 1000 block of ice structure, although only a quarter of those are selected. The fact that no prerequisite design qualification is needed is refreshing. 'The mix of experience and inexperience allows for the development of fresh ideas', says Jens Thoms Ivarsson, Icehotel Director of Design.

The Fuji X-TI GS, a retro joy to behold in Graphite Silver, makes light work of the chilly temperature inside as I snap away - after all it's freeze

resistant to -10 and Icehotel is a mere -5. The LCD boasts tempered glass too, for extra protection in the extreme cold. Standout installations are the Polar Night Suite, a rhapsody in blue polar light where a pack of wolves surround the bed to protect you and Renaissance whose light and sculptures proclaim rebirth, all captured by the scintillating 16.3 megapixel sensor shot using the XF56mm lens. Its F1.2 aperture garnishes images with beautiful bokeh (geek-speak for the way the lens renders out-of-focus points of light). Couples wishing to tie the knot (and up to 140 do each season) can waltz through an ice-sculpted forest of sinuous trees to the altar of The Church: In the Glade. Swedish design trio David Andrén, Johan Andrén and Tjåsa Gusfors have chiselled a fairytale holy room filled with light. A centrepiece fern slowly









# Talk the talk Aurora Borealis shoot list

In **manual** mode, set your shutter speed between 15-30seconds, with an ISO setting between **800-1200** and as low an f stop as your lens will go, i.e. f/2, f/2.8. Your lens must also be set to manual focus on infinity and beyond. Patience is key, keep having a play, refocus if necessary and if the lights show you have a very good chance of getting some fabulous photographic memories. Pack a **torch** that you can hang around your neck to check camera settings in the dark and a **lens** cloth to wipe away excess moisture. If it is windy, as it was when I visited, dig your **tripod** firmly in to the snow to minimise shake. Use a **shutter release cable** to lessen the chance of blur on the long exposures. It is essential your hands are warm so wear silk glove liners under fingerless gloves so that you can still ably adjust the camera dials. Be prepared for strays photobombing your shots or crunching through the snow disturbing your tripod.

unfolds its leaves while a sunflower, whose central axis tilts both clockwise and counter-clockwise, symbolises eternal love. This is where the XF50-I40mm high performance telephoto zoom comes in to its own, snapping details with the quietest autofocus I've known. Meaning you can go about shooting almost unnoticed in noise sensitive locations. With a bright F2.8 aperture, image stabilisation is a doddle as I go about shooting handheld – this lens goes where other lenses have not dared to tread. I have to pinch myself that I'm



not using a tripod. Stop by the **Icebar** by Icehotel for a nightcap vodka or Till lager, chances are there'll be some Scandi dudes strumming tunes under the blue light. For those wishing to make an artistic imprint on the ice themselves, fear not, there are workshops to guide you through the intricacies of ice sculpting. Starting with a block of surprisingly chisel-navigable ice, bring your artistic flair to the fore by crafting anything from a diamond ring (pictured inset left) to busts and other flowing organic forms. Adrenaline junkies can add husky sledging, snowmobiling or cross-country skiing to their itineraries, with deicing stops for reindeer goulash and hot lingonberry juice along the way.

One hundred kilometres further north-west lies Abisko, home to the Aurora Sky Station, widely accepted as one of the best places in the world to capture the phenomenon of the Northern Lights although sightings can never be guaranteed, those who visit have a 95 percent chance of hitting the aurora jackpot due to the proximity to the magnetic north and its clear inky black skies in the peak season between November and March. The spectacle occurs when charged particles emitted by the sun reach the earth's atmosphere on solar winds before colliding with gaseous particles. The various gases produce different colours, the most popular being pale light greens produced by oxygen. Patience is key There can be a lot of waiting around in the cold, but if the lights do decide to show themselves it can be pretty spectacular. Waves of undulating curtains of light dance across the sky, at times it's as though the



**Above:** Lee's kit featuring the Fuji X-T1 GS, XF56mm and XF50-140mm lenses and remote cable release, shot using the Fuji X100T.

Gods are brandishing oversized glow sticks through the heavens. Just to manage expectations: the colours the human eye detects are not always as vivid as those recorded on your camera sensor. If you go with that in mind you won't be underwhelmed. It is imperative you take time away from the viewfinder for the display to make an indelible mark on your own memory as well as that of your SD card.

Visit fujifilm.co.uk/X-TI for further details. Our itinerary was organised by Icehotel specialist,

Discover the World, travelling on their exclusive direct flight from London Heathrow to Icehotel,

Swedish Lapland. Visit discover-the-world.co.uk













#### BIKE HOTELS

Nodders are as bad as Freds – but at least they're not peds or cagers. Translation: inexperienced cyclists who ride with their whole body, causing their head to nod comically, are as ridiculous as the posers who deck themselves out in professional biking kit only to make a short dash from home to the nearest Starbucks – but at least they're not pedestrians or those poor fools trapped inside the motorised metal prisons they call cars. These days you don't have to be a MAMIL (middle-aged man in Lycra) or a hipster on a Lo-Pro (retro time-trial bike) to understand that cycling is a great way to get around – one that comes complete with its own language, look and subculture. And hotels. The Hôtel du Nord in Paris has been lending guests bicycles for years. Then Casa Camper in Barcelona got in on the act, with wooden-framed bikes suspended from the ceiling in the lobby for guests' use. New York has become increasingly bike-friendly, with a network of cycle lanes and the launch of the Citi Bike scheme. The James in SoHo has smart, utilitarian bicycles for guests, as well as official Tour de France exercise bikes in its gym, which simulate the cols and descents of La Grande Boucle. And, of course, the capital of the US indie bike scene, Portland, has an Ace Hotel with a fleet of cruisers. But now things have shifted up a gear, with the opening of Hotel Cycle, pictured, in Onomichi, Japan. From these converted warehouses you can pedal off and explore the area's coast, temples and gardens. There's a ride-through café and bakery, while the in-house workshop from Taiwanese über-brand Giant keeps guests' bikes tuned. You can even check in while still seated on your ride – then hang it on a wall-mounted rack in your room. MAX LEONARD

# GROOVE IS INTHE HEART

SOME SAY THAT BALI IS OVER-COOKED, A PARADISE THAT HAS LOST ITS WAY. BUT REALLY IT HAS JUST EVOLVED, TRANSFORMING FROM A LOW-KEY HIPPIE HAVEN TO A SOULFUL BIG HITTER WHERE YOU CAN STAY SMART BUT STILL FIND A BAREFOOT VIBE. LULI ORCHARD GIVES THE INSIDE TRACK









#### **BEST FINGER FOOD**

No need for cutlery at Waroeng Tugu, a stylishly rustic private kitchen in Hotel Tugu at Canggu Beach, where the chef chooses what to cook and you eat with your fingers. The menu might include grilled chicken marinated in coconut milk, steamed fish in banana leaves or stewed bamboo shoots and tofu. www. tuguhotels.com. About £30 for two



ali is abuzz. It has been for quite a while. This is where Charlie Chaplin came to party with Noël Coward, after all. But now more so than ever, and in a different way. You can see it from one end of the island to the other, though nowhere more so than in Seminyak, on the coast to the west of the capital, where the hotel, bar and shopping scene has gone from simmering to stratospheric. It is a magnet for creative people from all over the world, those on a mission to opt out of the rat race and take their chances here. You don't have to arrive on a one-way ticket to buy into this new vibe. The point is that, despite the grumbles about over-development, Bali continues to have huge appeal. The government is now putting greater emphasis on the environment by tightening building rules, and in terms of sustainability and economic growth, parts of the island, such as the laid-back town of Ubud, have proven that the two can go hand-in-hand. Elsewhere, several big hotel brands have set up spectacular sandcastles. There's The Chedi Sakala, on the south-eastern coast, and the Fairmont, on 200 metres of white sand in Sanur. Alila will open its fifth outpost in Bali later this year, in red-hot Seminyak. The people behind the hit Potato Head Beach Club are launching all-suite hotel The Katamama, and Philippe Starck his much-anticipated The Stairs. Meanwhile, Four Seasons has given its Sayan property an eco-sensitive refurb; the various Amans remain standard-bearers; and the COMO Shambhala Estate, high above the Ayung Gorge, is sitting as pretty as ever - as is the cliff-top Bulgari on the Bukit Peninsula, 150 metres above the Indian Ocean.

#### **BEST SECRET RETREAT**

Puri Ganesha is a laid-back hideaway on the less-visited north-west coast, the personal passion of Diana von Cranach. She creates menus based on local recipes, enhanced with her own expertise in raw food. Her signature dish is tempeh marinated in coriander seed, garlic, onion, turmeric and Javan mountain honey, topped with prawns and ginger flower, tomato, shallots and lemon basil. The spa is as good as the food; so are the rustic villas with pools. Diana also arranges activities through tour company Well-kept Secrets – visits to hidden beaches and insider-y restaurants, private picnics, whatever you fancy. www.puri ganesha.com. Villas from about £355 per night

#### **BEST TRAFFIC-BEATERS**

Gridlock is a problem on an island where there are supposedly now more mopeds than humans. Air Bali zips you from one side of Bali to the other, or to the neighbouring isles of Java, Lombok, Moyo, Banyuwangi and Tanjung Benoa. On landing, let a Blue Bird cab take the strain. www.airbali.com; www.bluebirdgroup.com

#### **BEST UNIFORMS**

Staff in bellhop-style outfits, lots of bubbles, Eighties music videos – everything about the Red Carpet Champagne Bar makes you want to crank up your favourite Duran Duran hit. www.redcarpetchampagnebar.com





## **BEST POLE DANCING**

Luna2 Studiotel, a hotel-plus-private-studios hybrid in Seminyak, has exceeded all expectations - not even the Aman hotels unpack your suitcases for you. Its restaurant, Orbit, is creating some of the most sophisticated food on the island (try the tournedos Rossini with wagyu beef, foie gras, black truffle and Madeira jus). There's an underground cinema where a waitress dressed like an air stewardess will serve you a Solid Gold Collins, a gin-based tribute to the Joan of the same name. Or subdue your inner Superman with a Kryptonite, a fluorescent concoction of absinthe, vodka, lime and pineapple, at Pop, the groovy bar which has a pole for dancing and a peephole window onto the pool. www.luna2.com/ studios. Doubles from about £295

#### **BEST FUSION**

Mama San Kitchen Bar Lounge is the little sister of the better-known Sarong, where the top-notch pan-Asian cuisine (soft-shell crab roll; red curry of duck with lychees; twice-cooked pork ribs with black beans, ginger and soy) is served in a retro warehouse with a Twenties Shanghai theme. It's indoors, over two floors, with air-conditioning – still a novelty in this part of the world. www. mamasanbali.com. About £20 for two



#### **BEST TENTS**

The owners of Sandat Glamping Tents, Bali's first foray into glamping territory, are Italian: she's a lawyer, he's a tattoo artist. As if from nowhere and out of nothing, they've created this deeply impressive set-up north of Ubud, in a picture-perfect valley of rice fields. www.glampingsandat.com.

Tents from about £140

## BEST HUNTER-GATHERER EXPERIENCE

Stroll the morning markets with Bumbu Bali Cooking School; go back to its traditional kitchen in Nusa Dua with your freshly acquired ingredients of fish, vegetables and spices; slice, dice, simmer and boil; then devour the delicious results. www.balifoods.com

## **BEST BEATS PLUS EATS**

The introduction of a dress code has done nothing to cramp anyone's style at the Seminyak institution Ku De Ta. The August parties are the stuff of legend: there's something on every night, with highlights including the Underwater Wonderland Bikini Party and White Party. The 12-course tasting menu (coral trout ceviche; foie gras and miso royale; Jimbaran seafood stew) at the upstairs restaurant, Mejekawi, is heaven. www.kudeta.net. About £55 for two



#### **BEST AFTER-DINNER DRINKS**

Just north of Ku Te Da, Mantra is a cute café/bar full of paintings, with lots of distressed wood and wrought-iron tables and chairs. Not the kind of place you'd automatically assume would be a late-night hotspot. But it is. www.mantrabali.com



www.okdiversbali.com







## **BEST SUNSET SCENE**

At La Plancha in Seminyak the vibe is relaxed, and as well as music there are screens showing surfing films, which you watch while sitting in oversized beanbags. Or, of course, you could turn your head a little and watch the sun set instead.

## **BEST CUTE HANGOUT**

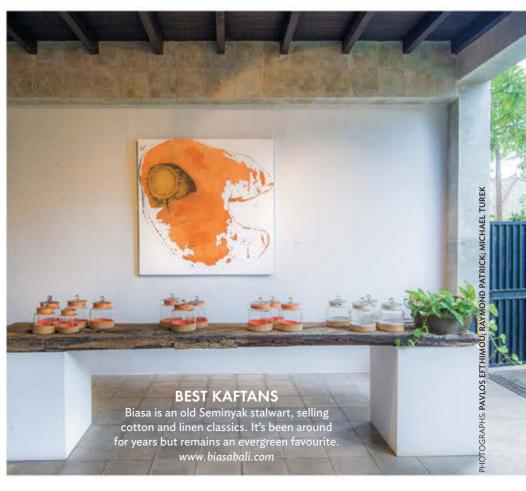
Old Man's, overlooking the breaks at Batu Bolong, is the latest outpost from Aussie expat Sean Cosgrove, of Petitenget Café fame. He's taken his uncomplicated approach and once again come up with another groovy, effortless joint: this time a beer garden by the beach.

#### **BEST TOTES**

Magali Pascal waves her chic French wand over everything she does – dresses, separates and, above all, bags. www.magalipascal.com

#### **BEST VILLAS**

In Bali, villas make total sense: the staff, the privacy, the value for money. Elite Havens, the wonderful Anita Lococo's Bali Tropical Villas and MaisonBulle have top properties with bags of character and style on their books. Uma Wana Prastna, in lush grounds 45 minutes or so from Seminyak, is perfect for parties: it has enough space to host a bash for 200 in a garden looking onto a gushing river and sleeps 14. www.elite havens.com; www.balitropical-villas.com; www.maisonbullehomes.com; www.luxurybaliestate.com

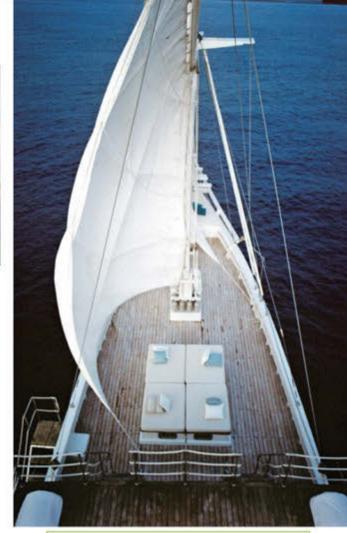


#### **BEST SUPER-HEALTHY CAFES**

For that wheatgrass-shot and organic-veg fix, it's got to be Betelnut in Batu Bolong (try the mixed-green smoothie) or Watercress in Batu Belig, which has just opened a by-night option, Watercress Malam. The house salad (toasted seeds, crispy tempeh, sweetcorn and leafy greens) is so good for you, you'll want to achieve balance by washing it down with a Lemongrass Tart cocktail of gin, lemongrass, lime marmalade and pomelo juice. www.watercressbali.com







#### **BEST YACHTS**

Indonesia has about 13,000 islands. Exploring them on a boat makes sense. Hotel groups such as Alila and Aman have their own; look out for the new Amandira, which plies the waters off Komodo. Or charter a live-aboard: Basilea or Alexa by Talika Oazia, owned by designer Veronika Blomgren, will do nicely. www.indonesian yachtcharter.com; www.alexaprivatecruises.com



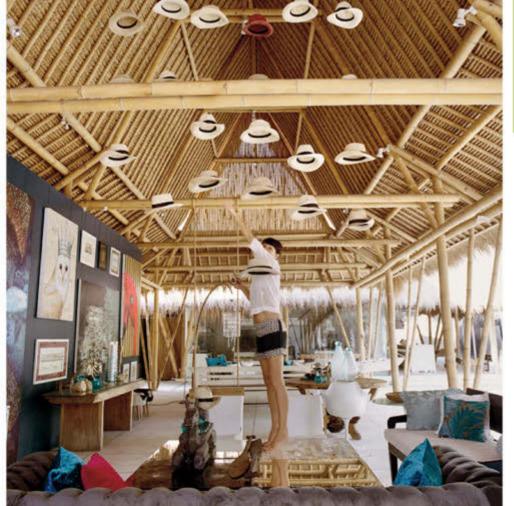
For the most delicious croissants this side of the Rive Gauche, head to Monsieur Spoon, down sideroads in Canggu and Umalas. In Ubud, Will Goldfarb, who launched the upstairs restaurant at Ku De Ta, has opened cake-centric Room 4 Dessert. Order the Loneliness Redux (feather-light cashew sponge, soy wafer, cardamom soy-milk bubbles and cocoa). www.monsieurspoon.com; www.room4dessert.asia

#### **BEST HOGS**

Whether you're after a customised motorbike, a surfboard with your own design or just a coffee and a bite of spicy Thai chicken, the guys at Deus Ex Machina, an amazing space on the way to Echo Beach in Canggu, can sort you out. www.deuscustoms.com

## **BEST TEXTILES**

In Ubud, Threads of Life is a non-profit foundation and shop that commissions weavers and dyers to make museum-quality material. www.threadsoflife.com





#### **BEST BANQUETTES**

Sip, a slither of a brasserie in Seminyak, is owned by Christian Vanneque, who became the youngest head sommelier in France when, at the tender age of 20, he was offered the position at La Tour d'Argent. It has traditional French fare, leather banquettes, mirrored walls, white linen and one of the best wine lists on the island.

www.sip-bali.com. About £25 for two

#### **BEST DINING ROOM**

The Merah Putih was the first high-end Indonesian restaurant in Bali with a serious international twist, and became an instant classic. The cathedral-like building is an inspiration. So is the Padang-beef-shin bak pao. www.merahputihbali.com. About £30 for two

#### **BEST TEQUILA**

Motel Mexicola looks like it's been airlifted in from somewhere south of the border, with its zany colour scheme, wax-dripping candles and fake flowers. Bonkers, and a great place to take a bunch of amigos. www.motelmexicolabali.com

#### **BEST NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGER**

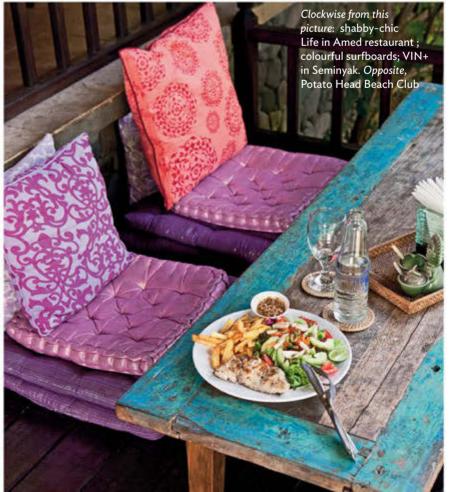
The Fairmont Sanur Beach Bali has given this sleepy corner of the south-eastern coast a bit of a wake-up call. The hotel's use of space and the minimal design are spectacular. The sound of a Balinese gamelan summons you to breakfast; the spa is so good it's addictive. www.fairmont.com. Doubles from £209



## BEST LADIES' FINISHING (SURF) SCHOOL

Release your inner Gidget at Surf Goddess Retreats. Created more than a decade ago as a way of encouraging women to get into the male-dominated surf scene, it caters to all levels from beginner to professional, and there's also horse-riding, cycling and a spa. Just no dudes – really. www.surfgoddessretreats.com













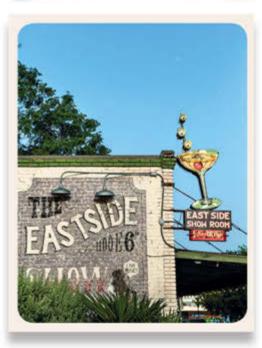












ACK IN THE DAY, Austin wasn't much more than a sleepy, hippy backwater with the sprawling University of Texas and bumper-to-bumper barbecue joints filled with cowboys. The ace up its sleeve was a uniquely liberal outlook compared to the rest of very conservative Texas and a music industry with a serious reputation as a training ground for raw, talented blues, rock and country singers – for starters, it's where Janis Joplin's career took off. All of these were reasons why, in 1987, the organisers of the inaugural SXSW music festival chose to locate it here. Also attracted by this be-vourself culture and laid-back, distinctly non-New York pace of life – not to mention the 300 days of sunshine a year – young creatives suddenly started moving here in droves. And they're still coming; an average of more than 100 new residents are added to the area's head count daily. Then there are the local technology companies and international brands, including Whole Foods and Dell, which now flock here to set up their the global headquarters. There's also a booming production industry: films such as True Grit and Miss Congeniality, and more recently hit television series Friday Night Lights, a kind of love letter to Texas, have been shot in the city. Sandra Bullock used to live here; Matthew McConaughey and local film-maker Richard Linklater still do.

Where Austin was once just a quirky oddball, it has been injected with a blast of alternative charisma. Like a lot of other American cities, it's sprawling, but wherever you look, the design, from the clapboard bungalows (everything is in bungalows: bars with no names, tiny boutiques, chic restaurants) to the handful of funky hotels, is spot-on for the contemporary aesthetic. Simple materials – exposed brick, natural wood, marble and copper – are left alone to shine, pepped up with the odd flash of bold colour.

There is also a slew of new restaurants that wouldn't look out of place in Brooklyn or Portland and first-class food trucks parked on almost every block. Over on the up-and-coming East Side (a less hectic, more low-key version of Shoreditch a decade ago), a weekend farmers' market and cool craft breweries are as much a part of the scene as the piñata shops and dive bars that have been here for years. And instead of big-name fashion brands dominating the main shopping district, SoCo (south of the Congress Bridge, home to 1.5 million bats that fly out to feed at sundown), it's packed with independent stores selling home-grown labels and vintage gems. Superstars such as Eminem and Calvin Harris fly in for Austin City Limits, the other big annual music festival, and rub shoulders with local legends playing honky-tonk and a traditional two-stepping crowd at the renowned Continental Club. Friendly Austinites really do fly the flag for Texan hospitality; don't be surprised if you find yourself accidentally gatecrashing a birthday party or having dinner bought for you. They are an outdoorsy bunch who spend their downtime swimming in Barton Springs, chilling out at Zilker Park or kayaking on pretty Lady Bird Lake, which slices the city from west to east.

The balance in Austin has certainly shifted somewhat over the last decade. There's a palpable buzz about the place and a sense that it's moving forward but without losing any of its kooky charm.











LOCALS REALLY
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HOSPITALITY: DON'T
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## WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

## The East Side

Every Sunday the **Hope Farmers Market** takes over Plaza Saltillo. Bluegrass and indie groups play on the bandstand, hammocks swing in the breeze and food stalls sell everything from kimchi to vegan cupcakes displayed under bell jars. *www.hopefarmersmarket.org* 

At weekend the queue spills out the door at **Hillside Farmacy**, a 1950s drugstore turned restaurant. The setting is industrial chic: a monochrome pentagon-patterned floor, old-fashioned weighing scales, tin lights and original cabinets filled with bottles of wine. Go for the piled-high fried-egg sandwich.

 $+1\ 512\ 628\ 0168; www.hillside farmacy.com.\ About\ \pounds 55\ for\ two$ 

Pierre and Justine Pelegrin originally opened French brasserie **Justine's** as somewhere to hang out with their friends. Now it's a neighbourhood favourite (people come for dinner and stay until 2am). The menu is full of classics – steak tartare, moules frites, endive-and-Roquefort salad – and there's a courtyard with tables and fairy lights. Jovial Pierre is usually behind the bar, choosing the records and chatting. +1 512 385 2900; www.justines1937.com. About £50 for two

**Salt & Time** is the only whole-animal butcher shop in Austin, selling cuts from sustainable Texan ranches; it's a salumeria, restaurant and bar, too. Tuck into a salumi board with chorizo, salami and cured pork loin while sipping a Pale Dog ale from craft brewer Hops & Grain served by bearded boys in denim shirts. +1 512 524 1383; www.saltandtime.com. About £50 for two

Star chef Paul Qui's flagship restaurant **Qui** was the hottest East Side opening of the last few years. (He won *Top Chef: Texas* three years ago and also oversees the three East Side King food trailers.) Grab a table on the terrace and eat delicious crispy pig's head and amberjack ceviche from the Filipino street food menu. Or sit inside and watch chefs in the open kitchen prepare Texas wagyu beef and cheddar-cheese ice cream with waffles for dessert. +1 512 436 9626; www.quiaustin.com. About £85 for two

In a residential-looking grey house with no obvious sign, cocktail bar **Weather Up** is easily missed. Prop up at the curving copper bar to drink a Count Basie (tequila, whisky, fresh lime and tangerine-habanero syrup) or hang out in the garden at the back. +1 512 524 0464; www.weatherupnyc.com

Step through the red velvet curtains into stripped-back **East Side Showroom** and order a Southern Belle (bourbon, honey, lemon and elderflower) from the waistcoat-wearing mixologist. Gypsy-jazz bands play at weekends. +1 512 467 4280; www. eastsideshowroom.com

#### **FOOD TRUCKS**

The best in this area are linked to dive bars. There's **Veracruz Taco House**, for *migas* tacos (with tortilla chips on top), outside The Grackle; **East Side King** in the beer garden at Wonderland bar (try the roasted-pork-belly buns); and **Via 313** beside the Violet Crown for square pizzas eaten on benches. For the best brisket, join the queue for **Franklin Barbecue** on E11th Street.

## South Lamar & South 1st

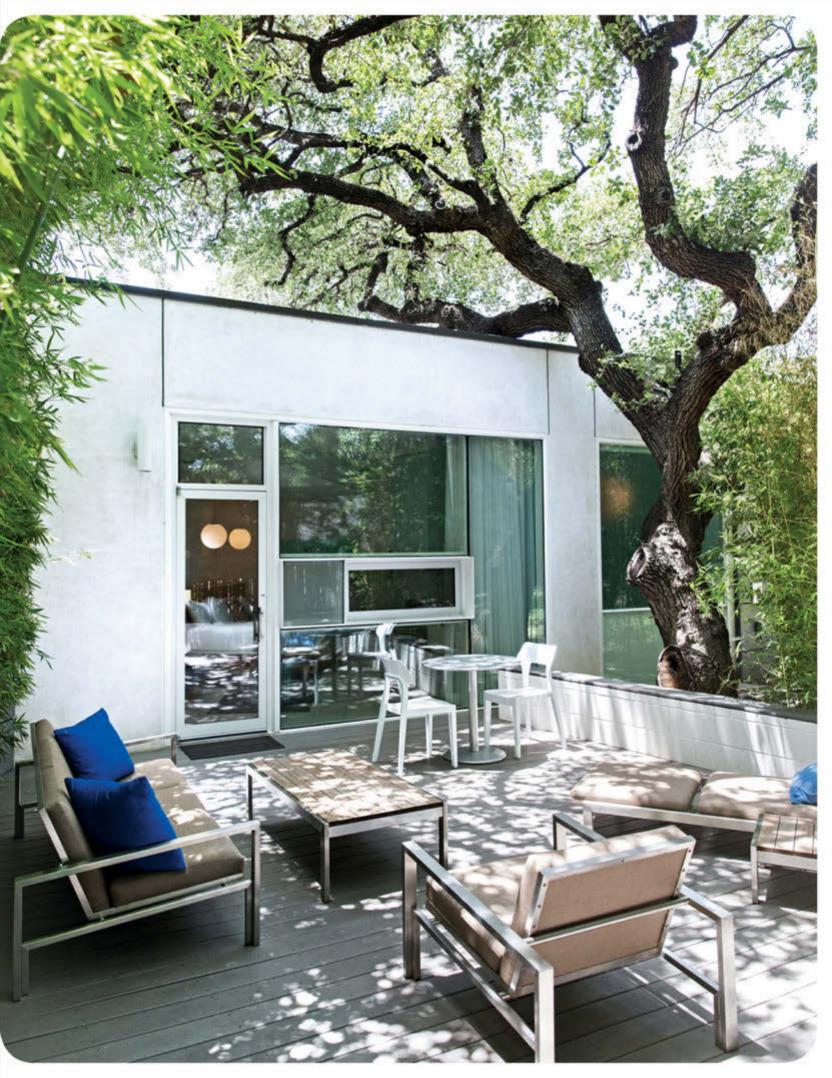
**Elizabeth Street Café** is part of Larry McGuire's mini restaurant empire, which also includes Perla's, a New England-style oyster bar on Congress Avenue. This French-Vietnamese coffee shop, bakery/restaurant has turquoise shutters and a candyfloss

Clockwise from top left: a kimono at Friends & Neighbors; Kimber Modern's courtyard; art by Martha Gannon at Kimber Modern; Heywood Hotel









pink door. Feast on fried rice with crispy redfish or drunken noodles with sausage, jalapeño and mushrooms. +1 512 291 2881; www.elizabethstreetcafe.com. About £40 for two

Owned by five friends (three of them chefs), former food truck **Odd Duck** reopened as a restaurant at the end of 2013 when the car park it was in was sold to developers. Eat shared plates at the bar, which is dotted with boxes of herbs and jars of pickles, in front of the open kitchen. The crab with French toast is amazing. +1 512 433 6521; www.oddduckaustin.com. About £60 for two

A stalwart of the Austin food scene, **Uchi** is the classic choice for a smart sushi supper. The interior has botanical wallpaper, wicker lights and teak; the food includes a 10-course chef's tasting menu. Uchiko is its newer, less formal sister on North Lamar. +1 512 916 4808; www.uchiaustin.com. About £80 for two

## Downtown

At modern-Mexican joint **La Condesa**, the *huevos Condesa* – layers of double-yolk fried eggs, bacon and chicken pieces on a base of potatoes and greens – sounds like it shouldn't work. But it does, especially after one too many tequilas the night before. +1 512 499 0300; www.lacondesa.com. About £55 for two

Avoid the strip known as Dirty 6th (it's full of college kids and shot bars) unless you're heading to **Easy Tiger**, a low-key bakery and German beer garden with table tennis near Waller Creek. The thing to order is a salted pretzel as big as your head. +1 512 614 4972; www.easytigeraustin.com. About £15 for two

## Clarksville

**Josephine House** is a cute neighbourhood spot for ladies who lunch (and brunch). There's a marble counter laid out with cheeses, charcuterie and salads (try the freekeh-and-artichoke) or you can order lamb empanadas and grilled cheese sandwiches from the kitchen. Most of the vegetables are grown in the restaurant's garden, which explains why everything tastes so fresh. +1 512 477 5584; www.josephineofaustin.com. About £50 for two

## North Loop

A Scandi-looking café and grocery with white chairs around beech tables and copper lights overhead, **Epicerie** is open for lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch, when the menu includes shrimps and grits and buttermilk pancakes. There's a jazz soundtrack, and piles of *beignets* and crumbly light shortbread by the till. +1 512 371 6840; www.epicerieaustin.com. About £45 for two

The focus is the food at no-frills restaurant **Foreign & Domestic**, owned by chef Ned Bryce. Whatever you order – a pretty plate of carrot butter with soft egg and spring vegetables; lamb shoulder with leeks – ask for a popover on the side. It's a bit like a Yorkshire pudding with Gruyère cheese sprinkled on top. +1 512 459 1010; www.fndaustin.com. About £60 for two

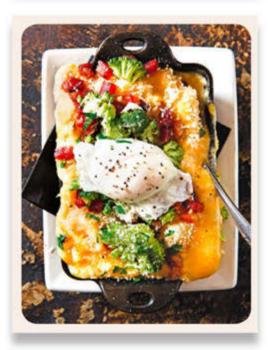
Rainey Street

One of the buzziest nightlife spots of the moment, this street is mostly lined with wooden bungalows that have been turned into bars. Some are chilled, others rock with live music every night, but the kingpins are cocktail bar **Half Step** (www.halfstep bar.com) and **Container Bar** (www.austincontainerbar.com), a series of stacked up containers, all decorated differently inside and linked by walkways around an outdoor terrace.

Clockwise from top left: beaded skulls at JM Drygoods; the sitting room at Saint Cecilia hotel; the cabin-like interior at Traveller Denim Co; mac and cheese at Hillside Farmacy; poolside at Hotel San José









## WHERE TO SHOP

## The East Side

Take Heart (www.takeheartshop.com) is the place for homeware and gifts handmade in the USA: botanical candles from Seattle; pottery by Vermont artist Jeremy Ayers. Helm Boots (www. helmboots.com) has been designing leather and suede footwear for men in its Austin studio since 2009 and opened a shop two years ago. It also sells accessories, including leather and canvas bags, wallets and shaving soap by other independent brands. The 913 Collective is split into five spaces. Most interesting are Farewell Books (www.farewellbookstore.com) for photography, art and design coffee-table publications and Las Cruxes (www.lascruxes. com), which stocks mens- and womenswear, jewellery and LPs. There's a record player so you can listen before you buy. Housed in a pretty bungalow, Friends & Neighbors (www.friendsaustin. com) has Indonesian and African textiles in a cupboard in the hall, beauty products in the bathroom, lingerie in the bedroom and pottery in the living room. Pick up a cup of Stumptown coffee from the grocery in the kitchen on the way out. Pastelcoloured paper flowers are strung up along the porch outside **Charm School Vintage** (www.charmschoolvintage.com). It's a second-hand treasure trove with sparkly dresses hanging from the ceiling, tightly coiled leather belts squeezed into an upended crate and cowboy boots on a bookshelf. Ink illustrations line one wall and there are Polaroids in the makeshift changing room. Solid Gold (www.solidgoldtx.com) stocks great independent fashion labels, including Mary Meyer from Brooklyn and San Francisco's Curator, and jewellery by local designers. In the same space is **Busy Being** (www.busy-being.com), for homeware: chopping boards, aprons and woven, hand-dved tapestry wall hangings. Stylist Laura Uhlir opened Olive (www.oliveaustin. com), named after the family dog, in a little white building last year. It has recently moved to a new location up the block and has a mix of vintage and new womenswear on the rails. Traveller Denim (www.travellerdenim.com) looks like a log cabin, with floor-to-ceiling wood panelling, but is the go-to spot for custom jeans. Choose the material from rolls on the wall; trousers are hemmed to your spec on the Singer sewing machine at the back.

## South Congress & around There are around a dozen vintage stores on this stretch but the

best is Feathers (www.feathersboutiquevintage.com), which also sells its own line made from old textiles. Cutting-edge **Blackmail** (www.blackmailboutique.com) specialises in black clothing by three Austin labels: Sisters of the Black Moon, Alchemy and designer-owner Gail Chovan – with a handful of white pieces thrown in. There's also punk-style jewellery by Rima Hyena and Chase & Scout. For better known names, By George (www. bygeorgeaustin.com) stocks Isabel Marant, Rag & Bone and Alexander Wang. South Congress Books (www.southcongress books.com) sells mostly second-hand tomes, as well as niche magazines and original music posters. For menswear, hit Stag (www.stagaustincom) and Service (www.servicemenswear.com), where the owners wash all the denim so it's pre-shrunk before it goes on the shop-floor. The most gorgeous homeware and lifestyle brands in town are Spartan (www.spartan-shop.com) and JM **Drygoods** (www.jmdrygoods.com), which share a space on South Lamar. There are ceramics, print cushions and Mexican imports, including linen shirts, striped rebozo scarfs and Oaxaca rugs.

## WHERE TO STAY

## The East Side

Heywood is the only hotel in this part of town. From the outside it looks like a normal house with a couple of swing seats on the porch, but at the back of this seven-room hideout there's a fantastic contemporary extension and deck. Rooms have wooden floors softened by monochrome rugs and exposed brickwork behind the beds (some also have a tiny private terrace with a fairy-lightsprinkled trellis) and there's a hotchpotch of textiles and prints by Texan artists. In the morning borrow bicycles to ride to Cenote, a lovely café five minutes down the road, for breakfast. +1 512 271 5522; www.heywoodhotel.com. Doubles from around £135

South Congress
Formerly a rundown motel, **Hotel San José** is now a hangout

for SoCo locals who come in the evenings to drink sake and beer in the lush courtyard while a DJ spins mellow tunes. There's a tiny pool and a wing behind it with three suites right in the middle of the action. Rooms have original, rough-around-theedges concrete and tiled floors, gorgeous duvet covers made from sewn-together Indian Maharaja Me sheets (buy them at reception) and stripy kimonos in the bathrooms. +1 512 852 2360; www.sanjosehotel.com. Doubles from around £125

By far the most rock'n'roll address in Austin, Saint Cecilia - named after the patron saint of musicians - has been a sanctuary for creatives since it opened six years ago. The sitting room has black leather sofas, a stuffed white peacock on the bar and a smoke-stained wall above the log-burning fireplace; it permanently looks like there's been a debauched party the night before. On the terrace there's a neon 'Soul' sign by local artist Evan Voyles and French-café-style wicker chairs and tables. Of the five rooms in the original 1800s mansion (the poolside bungalows are in new buildings), Suite 1 is particularly cool. +1 512 852 2400; www. hotelsaintcecilia.com. Doubles from about £225

**Kimber Modern** is an award-winning modernist building with a cluster of bedrooms named by colour and arranged in order of the rainbow around a triangular courtyard. This place is groovy and arty: Perspex boxes by Margo Sawyer on the walls; surreal rabbit paintings by Marfa-based artist Martha Gannon above the beds. Help yourself to breakfast in the open-plan kitchen and wine during happy hour every afternoon. The owners are opening a second, bigger outpost next year on Rainey Street. +1 512 912 1046; www.kimbermodern.com. Doubles from about £225

Judges Hill
A Greek Revival-style mansion 10 minutes' drive from downtown, Hotel Ella recently reopened after a revamp. The rooms in the historic main building feel grander than the two annexes at the back, which overlook the new pool, but they all share a modern vibe: dark wood wardrobes, plush armchairs and curved bedside lights. On Saturday nights Goodall's restaurant, named after the original owners who were given the house as a wedding present, heaves with a grown-up crowd tucking into buttermilk fried chicken. The hotel's Cadillac can ferry you to nearby sights. +1 512 495 1800; www.hotelella.com. Doubles from around £155 🕠

**GETTING THERE** British Airways (+44 844 493 0787; www.ba.com) flies daily from Heathrow to Austin

Clockwise from top left: Qui restaurant; Hillside Farmacy; psychedelic vintage at Prototype; a fried-egg sandwich at Hillside Farmacy; a bedroom in the Heywood Hotel; elote (corn) at La Condesa; the sign at La Condesa restaurant; the bathroom of Suite 1 at Saint Cecilia













## 12 REASONS WHY WE LOVE AUSTIN

RICHARD LINKLATER The indie-movie legend was born in Houston but, after dropping out of college and working on an oil rig, became cool in Austin. He founded the Austin Film Society before going on to make movies of his own, including Slacker, Boyhood and the superb Before Sunrise/Sunset/Midnight trilogy. All of which starred Ethan Hawke, a native of... Austin.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS The book was set in Odessa, Texas, but all five seasons of the highschool football-team TV drama were shot in Austin – well, apart from a few bits in Pflugerville, which pfrankly doesn't have quite the same ring to it. So that makes Austin the spiritual if not the literal home of full-back heart-throb and genial ne'er-do-well Tim Riggins.

**WILLIE NELSON** When he's not on a tour bus or sunning himself in Hawaii, the grizzled, ponytailed country singer can be found on his ranch outside Austin, which he has had since the early 1970s.



**SISTER CITIES** Austin is twinned with 14 places around the world, including, bizarrely and perhaps aptly, Hackney.

BREAKFAST TACOS There's a scene in the movie, Blue in the Face, where Jim Jarmusch, in conversation with Harvey Keitel in a New York diner, drawls: 'Coffee and cigarettes, you know? That's, like, the breakfast of champions.' But that's, like, a bunch of white-bread east-coast hipster baloney. In Austin, the breakfast of champions involves more substantial fare, ideally in the calorie-rich form of a ham, egg and refried-bean taco. Followed, maybe, by coffee and cigarettes.

**BINGO WITH A DIFFERENCE** At the Little Longhorn Saloon, owned by country-music legend Dale Watson, the Sunday-night draw is Chicken Shit Bingo. Sissy the chicken is plonked onto a giant bingo card, and, well, you can guess what happens next.



BARTON SPRINGS POOL A spring-fed swimming pool and popular year-round hangout where the water is always 20°C. Which, scientists have discovered, is a pleasant temperature not only for humans but also for the Barton Springs salamander, a protected species that has probably been slithering and sliming around with the other swimmers all along.

THE PEOPLE Texan hospitality rules, but it's worth learning some of the Texan rules while you're enjoying the hospitality. These have been eloquently summarised by Kinky Friedman, an Austin-educated satirist and novelist who once ran for governor of Texas. His *Guide to Texas Etiquette* includes such practical tips as: 'Just because you can drive on snow and ice where you come from does not mean you can drive in a Texas downpour. When it rains hard, stay home. If you have to drive, get on the highway, move into the fast lane, and go no faster than 35 miles per hour. If you have to drive at night, watch out for the deer. Only hit the ones with huge antlers, because they make the best wall hangings.'

THE TEXAS LONGHORNS The Dallas Cowboys are more famous, but when in Austin be polite and express support for the Longhorns. 'Hook 'em, Horns' is their slogan and hand gesture – that goofy heavy-metal thing where you make a fist with your thumb and little finger sticking out and wave your hand in the air. Kind of cute when you realise what the sticky-out fingers look like.

**KEEP AUSTIN WEIRD** The phrase that launched a thousand bumper stickers was coined 15 years ago by a librarian called Red Wassenich, when he phoned in a pledge to a local radio station. It has since been ripped off by T-shirt makers and other municipalities across the USA.

**STRANGE LAWS** In Texas it is illegal to milk another person's cow. Or to take more than three sips of beer in succession while standing.

**COWBOYS** Austin is in Texas, after all, and dudes still ride around on horseback. A final word of advice, therefore, from Friedman: 'Only two kinds of people can get away with wearing their hats indoors: cowboys and Jews. Try to be one of them.'

# SO SOLID CREW

WHEN IT COMES TO IRISH CASTLES THERE ARE MANY PRETENDERS, BUT ONLY A FEW TRUE STRONGHOLDS WHERE YOU CAN LORD IT UP IN STYLE WITH YOUR CLAN. STANLEY STEWART LAYS CLAIM TO FOUR. PHOTOGRAPHS BY BILL PHELPS





Normans started the craze in the 12th century with sprawling, moated, battlemented ramparts, castles to withstand howling catapult-hurling hordes, castles with keeps and drawbridges and portcullises and machicolations. Impressed, the native Irish 'kings' started on castle building. And in the Middle Ages there were literally hundreds of Irish kings, ruling over territories as large as provinces or as small as a few stony fields.

In the end, Ireland became the most castellated country on earth. Between Antrim and Wexford, thousands of castles are scattered across the land, from romantic, vine-strangled towers, abandoned to the rain centuries ago, to fully restored fantasies where suits of armour line the passageways. They chart a painful history. They tell stories of the country's susceptibility to foreign invasion as well as the inability of homegrown rulers to agree on anything. Their rooms are full of tales of defeat and exile. All the melancholy romance of Ireland is focused on their old walls.

But Irish castles were always about more than just defence. They were built for prestige, for show. The moment one king added a further storey, the chap down the road needed to do the same lest he be thought minor royalty. Their castles became centres of culture, of identity, of longing. This was where musicians gathered and minstrels sang, where poets waited in the forecourt clutching verses to their tunics, and swaggering soldiery loitered in

into County Waterford. Between the hedges were glimpses of tilting fields and muddy cattle. The river arrived, the Blackwater, wide and copper-coloured beneath heavy trees. Above stood the castle, its long crenellated face swathed in mists. 'Look, darling,' I said. But Sophia's nose was already pressed to the window.

A moment later we slipped down the rabbit hole. Castle gates swung open. A butler appeared with an umbrella to usher us inside. We passed through vaulted reception rooms, where fires crackled in the grates. In a bow window, overlooking a gorgeous reach of the Blackwater, afternoon tea was laid: cucumber and salmon sandwiches, scones with clotted cream, several cakes and lashings of tea.

Lismore is the Irish cousin of Chatsworth House, part of the patrimony of the Dukes of Devonshire. It was originally a monastery, founded by St Carthage in 635 and one of the greatest seats of learning in Europe until the Vikings turned up to disrupt the classroom schedules. By the 11th century the monastery had been replaced by a great Anglo-Norman castle. By the 16th century the entire estate had been acquired by Sir Walter Raleigh, a busy man in a busy age.

'Being at Lismore is like being in a dream,' says Lord Burlington, the present Duke's eldest son, 'partly because the layers of history are so palpable. Once, when I was a child,

## LADY CAROLINE MOPED ABOUT FOR WEEKS, RECOVERING FROM HER AFFAIR WITH BYRON

the hope of a bit of swordplay. A castle's strength, its reputation, its festivities were all a measure of the community's character. They were as much a source of pride to the ploughing peasant as they were to the men with the robes and the dodgy sceptres.

Inevitably they haunt the country's literature. Castles flit through the praise poems of the Middle Ages like celestial palaces. Fear Flatha Ó Gnímh writes of Edenduffcarrick as 'a vision shimmering above lake waters like a cloud.' Tadhg Dall Ó Huigínn extolled 'the fair pearls among babbling streams, the white ramparts among blue hills... the gleaming castles...' while a contemporary addresses the castle as if it is a sentient creature, promising 'it is time to vanquish thy sore heart'.

I was born in the shadow of an Irish castle. As a very young child I remember going to see the ruins of Dunluce, still my favourite, on the Antrim coast, its empty windows gazing across the sea to Scotland. And now I am going home to explore a handful of castles which visitors can make their own for a few days, and I am taking my daughter who is seven. She tells me she is an expert, having read a great deal about them, and is thrilled about the chance to sleep in one, to step into a storybook. So am I.

## ISMORF

It is easy to understand why Fred Astaire was in no hurry to leave, and it wasn't just the draw of Madden's pub down the road where he became one of the regulars. For all its grandeur, Lismore Castle has a way of making everyone feel at ease. The road to Lismore was a green tunnel, burrowing ever deeper

I put my hand down a hole in a wall at Lismore and felt the outline of a cannonball, which must have been there since the 1640s. And when you run your hand over the moss on an ancient wall you can't help but wonder if Sir Walter had done the same thing.'

The guestbook makes interesting reading. Edmund Spenser was said to have written parts of *The Faerie Queene* here. Lady Georgiana Spencer passed through by virtue of her curious marriage to the fifth Duke. Lady Caroline Lamb moped about the place for several weeks, complaining of the damp and the cold, while recovering from her disastrous love affair with Lord Byron. In a more recent century there was Lucian Freud, John Betjeman, Cecil Beaton, Patrick Leigh Fermor, and the young JFK. And of course Fred Astaire; his sister had married the 10th Duke's younger brother. Beneath Fred's signature in the guest book she wrote, 'I thought he would never leave.'

It may be one of Ireland's grandest castles, with the world's greatest domestic collection of Pugin furniture and a Great Hall of baronial swank, but there is nothing austere about Lismore. There may be 15 bedrooms and a formal garden – Ireland's oldest – but its charm is its cosy domesticity. Lismore feels like a rambling country house. There is an atmosphere of muddy boots and long walks, of fishing rods and

Opposite, clockwise from top left: a 1935 Riley TT Sprite Racer at Ballybur in County Kilkenny; rose in the formal garden at Lismore Castle; bedroom at Ballybur; stewed nectarines with vanilla at Lismore





THE GHOST AT BALLYBUR DIDN'T SEEM TO LIKE THE LOOK OF US. APPARENTLY IT'S PICKY ABOUT WHO IT CONSORTS WITH





board games, of inviting sofas and Sunday papers, of cosy window seats and roaring log fires. Though, of course, any castle deserves its moments of formality. It might have just been the two of us but Sophia liked the preparations for dinner every evening: laying her clothes out on the high bed, bathing in a tub the size of Norfolk, reprimanding her Papa on his choice of shirt. After drinks in front of the fire – apple juice for Sophia, peaty Irish whiskey for me – we went in to dinner among a dazzling array of family silver and cut glass, beneath the dour Van Dyke portraits of the 17th-century owners. Sophia took charge of the table bell to signal the butler when we were ready for the next course. In this way, we got to pudding without any unnecessary delays. In the end we both felt like Fred. It was a wrench to leave.

www.lismorecastle.com. The castle can sleep up to 37 people in the castle's 15 bedrooms and an additional five rooms in outlying buildings. Prices are from about £14,890 for a two-night stay for a group of up to 16 people, including breakfast, afternoon tea and dinner as well as full butler and concierge service

## BALLYBUR

Ballybur Castle is a medieval ghost at the end of a country lane in County Kilkenny. The most iconic type of Irish castle, this is a tower house rearing up from fields and woodlands. The exterior is grim and forbidding, its irregular stone courses streaked with lichen, its battlements mottled with ivy, its windows narrow slits. But the interior, through the kind of door accustomed to being unlocked with battering rams, is a

romantic retreat. The battles are done. Let the fun begin. The ground-floor kitchen has a farmhouse feel with a long wooden table, a butler sink, armchairs by the fire. I followed a scampering Sophia up the spiral staircase to three delightful bedrooms with bathrooms hidden away in corner nooks, then up again to a grand dining room with a minstrel gallery – presumably bring your own minstrels – and finally to the top floor and what would once have been the Great Hall, now a large drawing room with a fireplace the size of a small bus. Delighted with a castle that might have housed Rapunzel, Sophia bagged the fourposter bed, laying out teddy bears on the pillows, leaving me a cosy room next door with a vaulted ceiling and a pirate's chest.

In the Middle Ages there were said to be more than 8,000 tower houses in Ireland, each proclaiming the status and the power of a clan chief. Ballybur comes with the usual accoutrements – a ghost, a garderobe (the fancy word for an overhanging medieval loo), a prison, and a murder hole. The ghost didn't seem to like the look of us: apparently it is picky about who it consorts with. Modern plumbing mercifully has replaced the garderobe. The prison was a small enclosure beneath the flagstones just off the Great Hall while the murder hole was a nifty arrangement which allowed the occupant to drop boulders, boiling oil, poisonous snakes or whatever they fancied onto anyone who had not rung the bell. Every house should have one.

Ballybur had a brief heyday – it hosted a Papal Legate in the 1640s and Cromwell blew the roof off in the early 1650s – followed by several centuries of slow decline. By the 1970s it was inhabited by two elderly women who lived modestly on the



bottom floors. Which was when Frank and Aifric Gray spotted Ballybur in an estate agent's window in Kilkenny. They bought it for £20,000. They reckoned the renovations would take five years. Twenty-five years later, they were still putting the finishing touches to what had become a life's mission.

Ireland is full of castles that stray into Castle Kitsch, a style that is part regal Victoriana and part *Antiques Roadshow*, heavy on swagged red velvet, heraldic wallpaper, suits of amour, endless knick-knacks and the kind of varnished baronial furniture that looks like it comes from Castles R Us. But at Ballybur the Grays have found the perfect castle aesthetic, a spare understated style that enhances the drama of architecture. Pale fabrics and oriental rugs and cushions enhance the exposed stone, the ironwork, the great fireplaces and the soaring roof timbers. In the evenings, with the Irish rains lashing the windows and the candlelight flickering on the old walls, I read Sophia stories that might have been set in Ballybur's own rooms. www.ballyburcastle.com. From £984 for a weekend and from £1,476 for a week self-catering. Sleeps eight adults and four children

## BALLYFIN

Ballyfin is not a castle at all. But it is Ireland's most elegant representative of what castles became. When the old stone towers went to wrack and ruin, when the draughts could be measured on the Beaufort scale, or when the country was simply peaceful enough that you didn't need to keep a lookout for chaps in horned helmets, this is the upgrade that castle owners dreamt about: an elegant manor house at the heart of their

estates. The world beyond is no longer rough terrain glimpsed through narrow slits but landscaped parklands seen through French windows. The drawbridge was replaced with gracious semi-circular steps, the great hall with a drawing room of leather-bound books and pale Wedgwood vases, and the boiling oil of the murder hole with an obliging butler and a welcoming glass of whiskey.

At Ballyfin, the transition took place in the 18th century when the old Elizabethan castle was pulled down. In the 1820s Sir Charles Henry Coote, one of the richest men in Ireland, built the present house, a Regency masterpiece. While he oversaw the work, his wife Caroline toured Europe burning her way through her husband's credit notes as she snapped up Roman floor mosaics, Italianate fireplaces, Belgian chandeliers and the kind of artwork that would have beggared lesser fortunes. Everyone agreed the result was the grandest house in Ireland.

A century later, with Irish independence, the Cootes beat a retreat from Ireland and Ballyfin was sold to the Patrician Brothers who turned it into a boarding school. For the next 80 years, schoolboys at rows of graffitied desks knuckled down to their Latin conjugations in the grand ballroom while the old house gradually disintegrated around them.

Ballyfin's restoration is as spectacular as its original construction. It was bought by the sort of wealthy Americans

Above, left to right: one of the six bedrooms at the 15th-century Ballyportry in County Clare; view of the tower house; wild salmon prepared in Ballyportry's kitchen; Lismore Castle's head gardener, Darren Topps, by an original, Paxton-designed glasshouse



that all threadbare European aristocrats dream of: sympathetic souls with deep pockets. Fred and Kay Krehbiel embarked on an eight-year project that restored the great house to its original grandeur. The Roman mosaic in the entrance hall was revived and the gorgeous marquetry floors were meticulously pieced together again. The cornice and the friezes in the Gold Drawing Room were recast. The original paint palettes were rediscovered for the columns in the library. The rust-eaten conservatory, accessed from the library via a secret door, was restored. In 2010, Ballyfin opened as a 15-room luxury hotel, and this spring five new bedrooms are unveiled as the hotel reopens for its 2015 season. The result is irresistible. The grandest house in Ireland is now one of its grandest hotels.

www.ballyfin.com. Doubles from £800 full board; the entire castle costs £17,890 per night. Closed during January and February

## BALLYPORTRY

Sprawled across the north-west corner of County Clare is a bleak landscape of stone, water and sky. Open moorland stretches to long horizons. Wild flowers bloom between sheets of scarred karst limestone. Black turlough lakes pool at the feet of brooding hills. Swept by Atlantic gales, the Burren is made for castles. Prehistoric ring forts and medieval towers appear like natural outcrops, the guardians of this harshly beautiful country. Ballyportry is one of the most impressive, a tower house built in the 15th century for the O'Brien family, descendants of Brian Boru, the High King of Ireland.

We think of these western regions of Ireland as being remote and parochial. But in medieval times, when the sea was more reliable than the land for travellers, areas like the Burren would have been closely connected to the continent. In its day, Ballyportry would have had a cellar of French wines, tapestries from the Low Countries, pottery and silks from Spain, books and rosaries from Rome. This was not the stronghold of a barbarian chieftain but home to an educated and sophisticated elite, the aristocrats of the Old Gaelic Order, who thrived in the days before the English arrived to wreak such havoc on Irish culture.

The reconstruction of Ballyportry in the 1960s was the work of an American, Bob Brown. When Brown discovered that his vices in New York – staying up late and drinking too much – were virtues in County Clare, he decided to stay, and in a moment of madness he bought Ballyporty. Brown became a pioneer in the restoration of medieval tower houses and an inspiration to many later renovators, including Frank and Aifric Gray at Ballybur.

We were welcomed by the present owners, Siobhan and Pat Wallace, who have brought an intellectual life back to the tower. Siobhan is an architect while Pat, the director of the National Museum in Dublin, is an archaeologist. A grand dinner at their long wooden table was a feast of good food and great conversation ranging from the old Gaelic Order to Ian Paisley, from the Burren's rare wild flowers to the collapse of the role of sports in Irish identity.

Sophia and I set off for walks every day with local friends, visiting megalithic dolmens on bleak highlands, skirting the mysterious turloughs, searching for the rare pine martens in the woods, visiting the wind-hollowed ruins of the Cathedral at

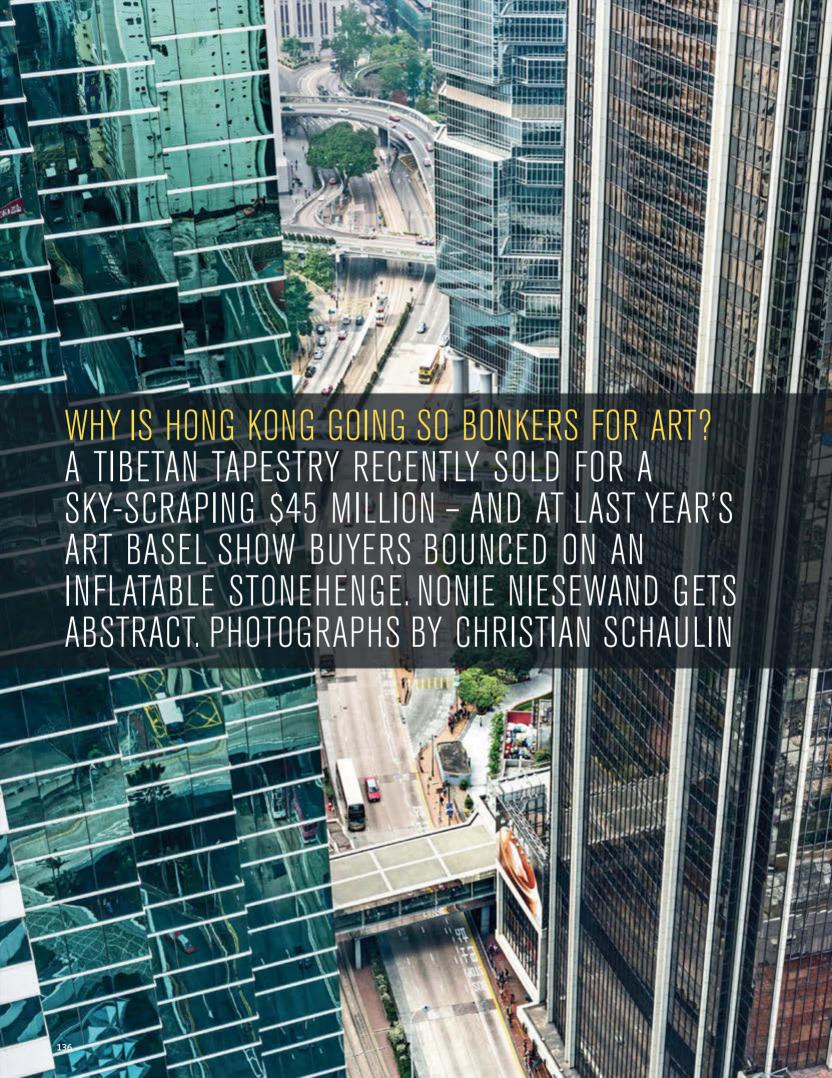
Opposite, clockwise from top left: stone wall in the rock-strewn landscape of the Burren in Country Clare; a rider at Lismore Castle, owned by the Duke of Devonshire; a smoke bush in the castle garden; the drawing room

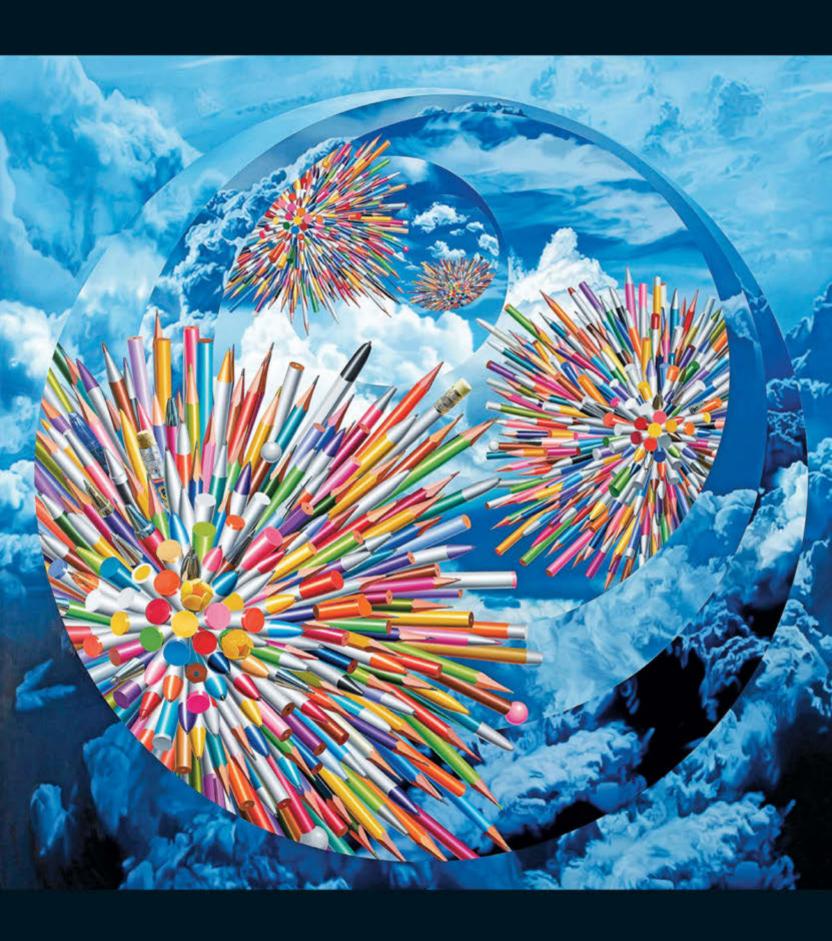


Kilfenora. One evening we sat by the peat fire in Linnane's pub entranced by airs and reels of the Kilfenora Céilí Band.

Another evening, in the Great Hall at Ballyportry, I had a medieval moment. A fire was burning in a grate large enough to roast an ox. From the high windows, I gazed across wetlands and tussocky pastures where two donkeys were grazing. On the horizon was the iconic shape of Mullaghmore. The wind was sighing among the battlements.

We have all trooped round castles at some point, climbed the stairs, peered into rooms from behind the velvet ropes. But at Ballyportry I had suddenly stepped over that velvet rope. In the Great Hall, beneath the massive roof timbers, I was throwing logs on the fire, lighting candles on the iron candle stands round the stone walls, sinking into the sofa with an account of the Flight of the Earls, that seminal moment when Ireland's greatest chieftains fled the country for exile on the continent. For a moment I felt close to the people who had once lived here, who had sat by this same fireplace, listened to the same winds, in a distant age when these castles were the centre of culture and longing in Ireland. Until Sophia arrived with a request to play princesses and pirates. And then we chased one another up and down what WB Yeats used to call the 'winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair'. www.ballyportry.ie. Three nights from £1,482; one week from £1,975 (sleeps eight people). Dinner can be prepared on the day of arrival from about £25 per person. For those who prefer a hotel in the Burren, the Gregans Castle Hotel (www.gregans.ie; doubles from £140) has one of the finest restaurants in the west of Ireland





Part of Friedrich Kunath's Earth to Fuckface exhibition at Hong Kong's White Cube gallery. Opposite, French restaurant Bibo; an Yves Klein sponge sculpture, from Switzerland's Galerie Gmurzynska, which features in this year's Art Basel Hong Kong



HE ART TYCOON Pearl Lam owns galleries in Shanghai and London, but right now she's at her base in Hong Kong because this is where it's all happening. A Russian oligarch with a private plane wants to fly out the lacquered tablets by Su Xiaobai she has on show. A curator from one of the biggest modernart museums in Asia tackles her about solo shows. She wants to tell me about Taoism and Buddhism and Chinese ink calligraphy.

Dressed in white Balenciaga and with deep-purple hair, five-inch Louboutins and bracelets as big as armbands, Pearl Lam even looks a bit like an artwork herself.

'I see myself as a bridge between East and West,' she says, sipping oolong tea from an elliptical porcelain cup. Seated on a sofa by the designer Danful Yang, which splices a Chinese Chippendale bench with a gilded Louis-the-something sofa, she makes the point vividly.

Hong Kong is now firmly on the international art circuit, with collectors and dealers pouring in, attracted by its location, no-tax-on-art policy and use of English as the language of business. As the art capital of Asia, it now challenges London and New York for the biggest share of the world's art market, with outposts of world-famous galleries and, of course, the five-day fest in March that is Art Basel Hong Kong. As art breathes new life into the city with the least available space on

earth, Hong Kong is changing fast. My first shock is to discover that so much land has been reclaimed from the sea that Norman Foster's HSBC building and IM Pei's Bank of China – two icons of 1970s and 1980s architecture built side-by-side on the waterfront – are now stranded metres back from the shoreline. Locals quip that Victoria Harbour, between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, will soon be known as Victoria Ditch.

The world's biggest arts venue is currently under construction on 40 hectares of reclaimed land on the Kowloon waterfront, so enormous it's created a whole new neighbourhood, the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD). Costing a staggering £1.8 billion and opening in stages over the next four years, WKCD will house an opera house, galleries, an arts pavilion, an outdoor stage and the M+ Museum for 20th- and 21st-century design and architecture, all contained in what resembles a skyscraper lying on its side, by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron. Antony Gormley's terracotta army, *Asian Field*, made from Chinese soil, will land here. So will the famous walk-in-sushi-bar artwork in granite by Japanese designer Shiro Kuramata.

The best place to watch the construction of WKCD is from the Ozone bar on top of The Ritz-Carlton hotel. In a city famed for its firsts and superlatives, it claims to be the highest bar in the world. Here there are binoculars at hand in booths furnished by Japanese design company Wonderwall, with shard-like





## ELECTRONICS, FAKE WATCHES AND HANDBAGS, YOU ARE SO LAST CENTURY

Cubist seating that's surprisingly comfortable. Which is just as well, as you may just want to collapse when presented with your sky-high bill for cocktails.

## DOWNTOWN COP SHOPS GET AN ARTISTIC MAKEOVER

In Downtown's forest of towering shopping malls and skyscraper banks, staid old colonial buildings are being revitalised all over the place. So far no fewer than 15 listed buildings clustered within the old Central Police Station and Victoria Gaol are being reimagined as an arts-and-heritage hub, thanks to an injection of cash from the philanthropic Jockey Club (which has run racing in Hong Kong since the 1860s) and skilled intervention from architects including Herzog & De Meuron.

A few hundred metres from the London-founded **White Cube** gallery is the neoclassical **Pedder Building**, built by the British in 1924, where blue-chip international galleries such as New York's Gagosian stage solo shows of world-famous artists (Giacometti, Damien Hirst), and the homegrown **Hanart TZ** shows work by major Chinese names such as Gu Wenda.

When I was in town for Art Basel HK, I joined a cool crowd taking selfies at the opening of the former Police Married Quarters buildings, now known as **PMQ**, a buzzy new design hub. Derelict for a decade, the dull but respectable twin blocks, built in the 1950s, have in the past been used as the location for Chinese horror movies. For Art Basel, on the very spot where a

policeman tries to revive his dead wife with Chinese medicine in Peter Chan's *Going Home*, Swarovski helped celebrate the buildings' reincarnation by hanging a huge full moon artwork made from more than 8,000 topaz crystals.

PMQ is the place to shop for hipster Hong Kong labels such as BlkSheep Empire's two-toned sharkskin brogues, shoes with hand-painted tiger tattoos at G.O.D (the Goods of Desire store), watermelon-slice earrings at The Refinery and red coral chandeliers at Lala Curio's. Dining here, you could be anywhere in the world. There's tapas at Vasco, Wilbur's for burgers and burritos, Sohofama for Chinese comfort food and modern British at Jason Atherton's Aberdeen Street Social, where dishes include salmon cured in beetroot and hen's eggs on haggis with pork crackling.

If you still think, as I did, that Hong Kong is the place to buy cut-price electronics, fake watches and handbags, then have a suit run up in 24 hours, you are so last century.

#### WHERE THE HIP CREATIVES DIG HERITAGE

The affable Chinese Anglophile Alan Lo has opened several restaurants, wine bars and coffee shops in retro buildings all over Hong Kong. At **The Pawn** bar in the old Woo Cheong Pawn Shop, built in the 1890s, there are leather Chesterfields and wooden benches, just as you might find in a gentleman's club (and English chef Tom Aikens overseeing things in

the kitchen). **The Principal**, set in an old school, even has two Michelin stars for Jonay Armas's globe-trotting menu (slow-cooked suckling pig with lemon purée, venison with chestnuts and Jerusalem artichoke) and a 700-label wine atlas.

'I'm passionate about conserving heritage buildings and bringing them back to life,' he tells me. And as chairman of the Hong Kong Ambassadors of Design, that sentiment serves the city far better than a blue plaque in London.

Lo is co-founder of **Duddell's**, the most popular art-house meeting place in the city. Designed by Ilse Crawford in an Art Deco-inspired mansion, it's a bit like London's Chelsea Arts Club, without the frayed edges but with a crowd that's just as opinionated. Jazz plays, there's an elegant two-Michelin-starred Cantonese restaurant, a rooftop terrace and a library where you can use your mobile. The contemporary art on the walls is every bit as entertaining as the people watching.

Lo's next venture is a hotel, scheduled to open in 2017 in the grittiest bit of Kowloon, seven minutes' drive from the upcoming West Kowloon Cultural District arts complex. The hotel (no name as yet) is being designed by Thomas Heatherwick as 'a small hotel with the history and heritage of the site in its architecture'. Which are not words you get to hear that often in skyscraper city.

I asked Lo where else the art crowd likes to dine. He led me to **Ammo**, a bistro in the former munitions dump that houses the Asia Society. Here, American architects Todd Williams and Billie Tsien have designed a glass box in the middle of a *Jurassic Park*-style jungle setting, and designer Joyce Wang has fantailed copper pipes like bullet casings along an entire wall. Wang was also responsible for the interiors at **Mott 32** restaurant in the bank vault of the Standard and Chartered Bank, created to look like a Chinese emigrant's home in 1930s New York, and as glamorous as a film set from *Chinatown*.

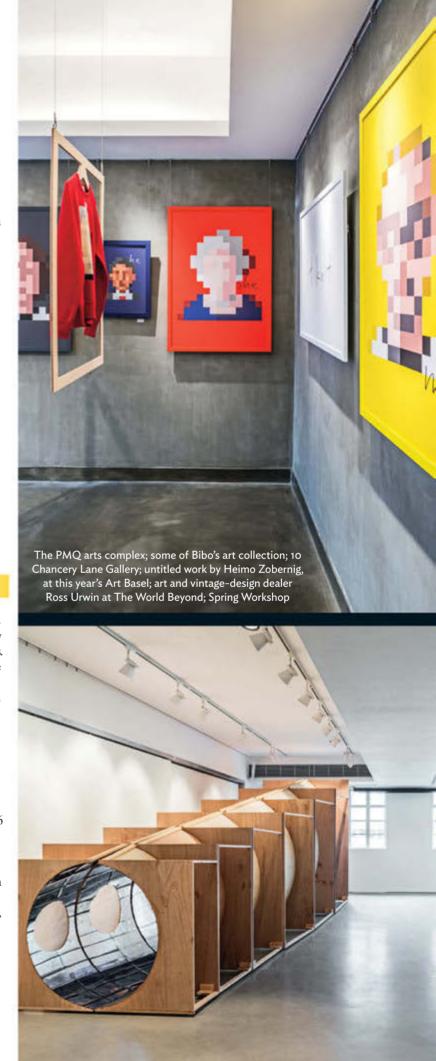
## OUT OF THE WASTELANDS, A NEW LOFT SCENE RISES

As China takes manufacturing to the mainland, Hong Kong's empty factories and warehouses are fast being colonised by artists and designers, creating a burgeoning loft scene in the city's gritty industrial fringes to rival New York's SoHo or London's Docklands. And you know something's working when smart guests from The Peninsula hotel start arriving in rough-around-the-edges areas like Fo Tan and Wong Chuk Hang in chauffeured Mini Clubmans.

Wong Chuk Hang is where the young American heiress Mimi Brown runs her non-profit **Spring Workshop** on one vast floor of a dust-blasted former clothing warehouse, engulfed by exhaust fumes and surrounded by yellow construction cranes. From this base – where the walls are covered in acres of shocking-pink wallpaper finger-painted by kids – Brown organises the kind of wacky arts programmes that are attracting attention in distant Central, a bus ride away (although from 2016 a new MTR station will bring them closer).

Where seamstresses' treadle machines once tapped, Gujarati protest songs rap, while on Brown's AstroTurfed roof terrace, artists and agronomists harvest edible crops, sculpt food and film their experiments. One of her publications is a map showing local places to eat: Nam Long Shan Road's cooked-food market, Pattaya Thai, Mum Veggie + Coffee + Sweet, GCX Café and Kyoto Matcha Café, whose neon signs reveal the nature of their food, basic rather than lavish, with prices to match.

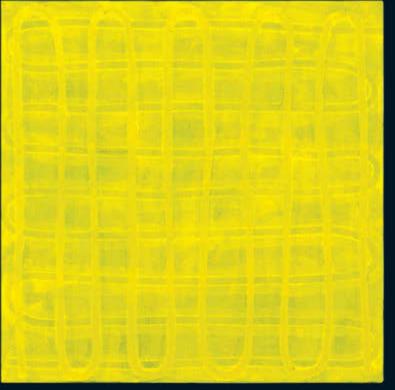
Further east at Chai Wan, in the heart of high-rise, lowincome housing, young artists and designers have set up studios in derelict buildings and galleries have opened alongside to

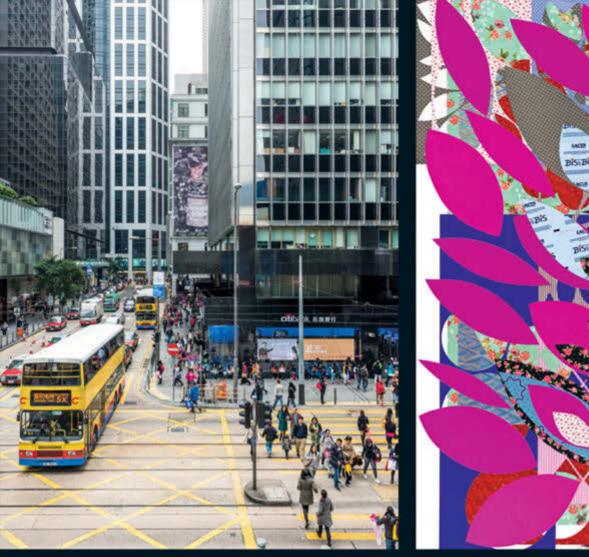














sell their work. **AO Vertical Art Space** is the world's first vertical photographic gallery, running up the stairs between the 3rd and 13th floors of a former factory; **Platform China** takes on radical art projects from artists including Zhao Zhao, who cut up a 200-year-old Buddha into Lego-like pieces, then gilded and reassembled them as chess pieces. Hanging from steel beams in **10 Chancery Lane Gallery**'s warehouse space, huge silk-embroidered banknotes from lost dynasties by Shao Yinong and Muchen show how these industrial spaces can encourage artists and curators to think spatially. Elsewhere, adventurous designers Jesse McLin and Julie Progin mould porcelain vessels from **Latitude #22 N**, a studio in a 1970s warehouse above a car park, and Paolo Sinisterra and Ignacio Garciá design clothes for their Tangram fashion label.

This clearly isn't the place to come for a nice watercolour.

## EVEN THE LATEST HOTELS GET CONCEPTUALLY CREATIVE

The art crowd has been clearly targeted at André Fu's luxurious temple to hedonism, **The Upper House** hotel in posh Pacific Place, and at the briskly business-like **EAST**, designed by William Lim on the fringe in the new financial district of Tai Koo, both operated by the creatively savvy Swire Hotels group.

'A great hotel should tell a story,' says Cambridge architecture graduate Fu, taking me on his 'poetic journey' through The Upper House. The tour begins, as in so many high rises in Hong

Kong, on an escalator he calls Torii (gateway in Japanese), built to transport guests from the stone curtain of its rugged façade to The Secret Garden and The Pond, where he has flooded some of the most expensive real estate in world.

Not intended for paddling, the pool is there simply to calm guests, who can watch rippling reflections play on the parchment walls lit by The Void, as Fu calls the atrium.

The lift is a backlit onyx box with a chime-like temple gong to whisk diners to the top-floor restaurant, **Café Gray Deluxe**, where there are views across Victoria Harbour of the nightly fireworks, and great culinary flair in the kitchen with dishes such as lemongrass lobster bisque, milk-fed wagyu beef with truffles and passion-fruit millefeuille.

Set amid the smoked-glass skyscrapers of office blocks, EAST hotel pulls in wheeler-dealers who want a quick turnaround at its restaurant, FEAST, brisk workouts at the gym, BEAST, and bedrooms that double as paperless offices.

The cloud of sculpted bronze butterflies in the lobby is a visual reminder of just how easily time-weary guests can land here, travelling east from Central on the MTR in 10 minutes for about 60 pence. The glossy, modern underground station entrance is right outside the lobby.

The bedrooms at EAST are actually two or three times smaller than at The Upper House but look bigger than they are, with burnt-orange flashes on panels placed between mirrored walls. Harbour-facing rooms above the 18th floor have views



# LET'S RAP AND ROLL

The first Art Basel, in 1970, was a subdued affair that was all about art and took place in Basel. Now it's a multibillion-dollar circus that happens in Miami and Hong Kong as well as Basel. Rappers love it. At Miami last December Andre 3000 exhibited his jumpsuits, P Diddy shopped for a Picasso, 2 Chainz posted clips of himself tooling around town in a Bentley, Swizz Beats admired his own portrait and Usher paid \$20 to plug his iPhone into a woman's vagina, at 'Body As Commodity' - an installation where a model housing a portable battery pack acted as a human phone charger. Meanwhile, Miley Cyrus smoked dope

onstage, did a duet with a topless lady and sang a song she said she wrote after a friend's cat spoke to her in a dream. Will such high-jinks become the norm in Hong Kong? Probably not, though signs of a sense of humour are encouraging. Popular exhibits at the inaugural fair included a giant upturned inflatable cockroach and a suckling pig big enough to walk into. Whether the rappers come to Hong Kong or not, the fact remains that China is the world's second-largest art market, after the USA, and Asia is home to more billionaires than North America. STEVE KING

### GETTING THERE

WEXAS Travel (+44 20 7838 5892; www.wexas.com) can arrange itineraries to Hong Kong during Art Basel (15–17 March 2015) from £1,695 per person based on two sharing. This includes three nights at The Upper House and three nights at EAST Hong Kong including return flights from

London with Cathay Pacific and all transfers. Specialist guides can also be arranged for a bespoke tour of the city's art scene. Cathay Pacific (www.cathaypacific.co.uk) flies five times daily between Heathrow and Hong Kong, and four times weekly from Manchester

of the new cruise-line terminus built on the apron of the former airport, Kai Tak. On the 32nd floor, Sugar bar and rooftop terrace is the place to chill on a balmy evening when a DJ plays Cuban salsa accompanied by a lone saxophonist and life just couldn't be sweeter.

### STREET ART MIXES IT UP ON THE COCKTAIL SCENE

For a long time, Hong Kong's frenetic nightlife centred on fancy hotel bars and glitzy clubs swarming with corporate types. Now sophisticated international venues for the art crowd are opening in fast-gentrifying, low-rent areas. In the scruffy neighbourhood of Sai Ying Pun, for example, the best tapas bar this side of Barcelona has opened in the basement of a former ping-pong club. **Ping Pong 129 Gintonería** is a cavernous space decorated with graffiti by Hong Kong's Banksy, the late Tsang Tsou Choi, aka the King of Kowloon. The huge bar, lit with a neon sign in Chinese, 'Train Your Body', serves 40 gins from around the world and seriously artisanal beers. Around the corner, smartly dressed crowds spill onto the street from private viewings at the tiny **2P gallery**.

Over in the boho district of Sheung Wan, where stone dragons still stand outside antique shops and lions guard the celadon-green tiled Man Mo temple, the art crowd eats at **Yardbird**, a *yakitori* skewer joint with minimalist white decor, or heads to the bistro **Bibo** for serious-art-with-street-cred

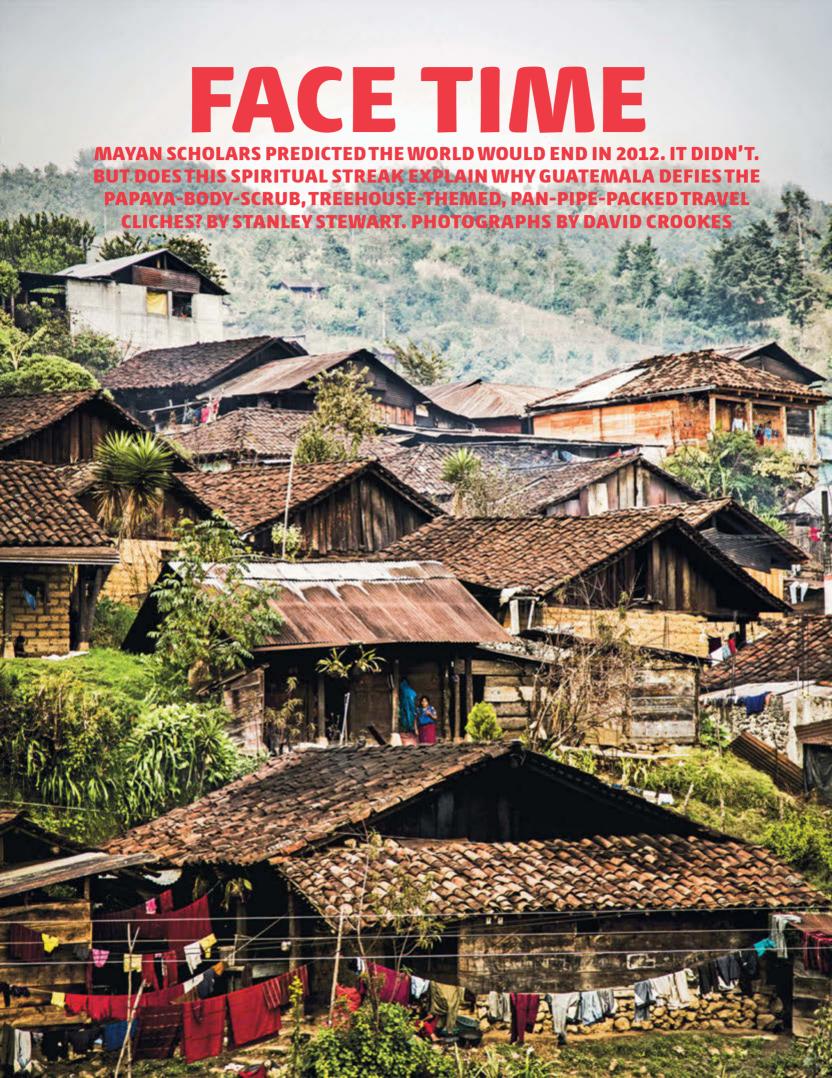
from Takashi Murakami, Kaw, Jean-Michel Basquiat... and a scooter graffitied by the King of Kowloon himself. The Coffin Varnish cocktail served here – South American tonka beans infused with calvados, vermouth, lemon juice, honey, Earl Grey tea and Champagne – captures the flavour of this eclectic district in a glass.

One of the city's edgiest independent art organisations, **Para Site**, also in Sheung Wan, has shown controversial Chinese artist Ai Weiwei twice, resulting in the end of their government funding. But an annual fundraising auction, corporate sponsorship and patrons from around the world continue to support provocative shows such as 'Ten Million Rooms of Yearning: Sex in Hong Kong'.

At the **Asia Art Archive**, Claire Hsu – crowned 'The Queen of Arts' by *Hong Kong Tatler* magazine – made archival material compelling in a recent exhibition, 'Mapping Asia', about disputed territories and nationalities in Asia. Heading an institution which houses the largest online – and on-shelf – library of contemporary Asian art history, she addressed the World Economic Forum at Davos in 2014 on cultural heritage. 'Artists have to be free to express themselves,' she said. 'Censorship must be resisted at every step, and we in Hong Kong are at both an important and vulnerable point in our cultural identity.'

As Hong Kong comes of age politically and culturally, it could be opening up a lot more than art fairs.





T WAS THE FOURTH FRIDAY OF LENT in Chajul in the remote highlands of Guatemala, and on the steps of the church the shaman priests, the convenors with the dead, were busy intoning ancient spells while pouring libations of rum on the threshold. Inside, kneeling among the throng of worshippers in the centre aisle, the old man took off his cowboy hat. 'I am glad to be here another year,' he began. 'I wasn't sure I would be. My daughter – you remember Nora – comes to check on me from time to time now that Maria is gone.'

The floor of the church glowed with thousands of smoking candles, a carpet of low, yellow flame that spread down the aisles and swarmed up the altar steps. Through the guttering smoke and the trembling heat, the altarpieces, the soaring angels, the suffering Christ, seemed dreamlike, spectral, as insubstantial as visions. The church had been overtaken by the Mayan world.

'My health is good, apart from that trouble with the bowels,' the old man went on. 'OK, not unusual for a man of my age. Miguel, the one who lives on the Nebaj road, had the same...' He paused and fumbled inside his poncho, pulling out a bottle of rum. 'I know, I know what you are thinking,' he went on. 'Why am I still seeing the woman Nadia...'

Kneeling beside my pew, his head seemed to be tilted towards me, a stranger among devotional crowds, sharing confidences.

NORMAN LEWIS, THE GREAT TRAVEL WRITER, was so overwhelmed by Guatemala he worried the rest of the world would pale by comparison. He was right at least about the rest of Central

# THE VOLCANOES ARE LIKE A CHILD'S DRAWING, CONES CRAYONED BLUE, HEADS BUMPING INTO THE CLOUDS

America. More familiar places such as Panama and Costa Rica can seem a little anaemic after the colourful tumult of Guatemala. This is a place travellers fall in love with. All over the country I met people who came for a week and ended up staying for years.

It helps that it is stunningly beautiful. It may be barely threequarters the size of England, but it packs in as many landscapes as Africa. There are windswept plateaus, verdant valleys, impenetrable jungles, palm-fringed shores, mysterious cloud forests. The spine of the country has about 30 volcanoes, their colossal symmetries like a child's drawing of mountains: perfect cones, crayoned with blue, bumping their heads against the clouds.

The intensity of the place comes from the blend of two great traditions: colonial Spanish and indigenous Mayan. Once the capital of Central America, Antigua is the prettiest colonial city in the western hemisphere, with grand churches, elegant plazas, cobbled streets and flower-filled courtyards. The Mayan influence is rather more elusive. The ruins of their cities – once larger than any in Renaissance Europe – brood in vine-strangled splendour in jungles inhabited by howler monkeys and glamorous toucans. Clambering through these sites is fascinating, but I struggled to understand who the Maya were. In the jungle gloom, they seemed so silent.

And yet Guatemala is one of those happy countries where the indigenous population was not wiped out by the Spanish Conquest,

Top row, from left: a girl with home-grown black corn; the Compañía de Jesús church in Antigua; a Todos Santos resident. Bottom row: a shaman's charms; a woman wearing a tocoyal headpiece; a church altar in Santiago. Previous pages: a Todos Santos man in a hand-stitched hat; Chajul village











# IN THE MARKET, A BUDGIE TOLD MY FORTUNE BY CHOOSING A SLIP OF PAPER FROM A SPINNING CAROUSEL

and where half the population see themselves as Mayans first and Guatemalans second. In towns and cities they may be pretty indistinguishable from their Latino neighbours. But up-country the old traditions survive with a richness that is startling. In the remote western highlands, the silent ruins come to life.

So I SET OFF IN SEARCH of the world of the Maya, into the regions where you can still see how they dressed, ate, worshipped and spoke. I was travelling in a four-wheel-drive, armed with several large-scale maps, a bird book full of barely believable illustrations, a crate or two of Gallo, Guatemala's best beer, and the idea that I could commune with the ancient world of Meso-America. My guide, Vinicius, had been a soldier in these highlands. He came armed with a trunk-load of haunting memories.

The journey was a rollercoaster. We climbed long switchbacks to the passes of the Cuchumatanes range, where vultures soared and the views, ringed by volcanoes, seemed to take in half of Central America. Then we plummeted past villages isolated among stands of maize into valleys with hot, bustling towns of white churches and colonial arcades. Then the mountains reared again, and we climbed from 200 metres to 2,000 in the space of a dizzy hour.

There were markets everywhere, a tumult of colour, produce, music, gossip, fruit, fabulous embroidery, big hats, low awnings, fortune-tellers, piles of underwear, shovels, hoes, lost children, breast-feeding mothers, drunk men, itinerant photographers,

several mountains of potatoes, several more of corn cobs, 20 kinds of mango, religious candles for every problem, clothes for every occasion, baskets for every commodity and endless tasty snacks cooked by twinkle-eyed grannies. Everyone tried to pretend the markets were commercial gatherings, where villagers gathered to buy and sell produce. But really they were grand social occasions combining the dressiness of Ascot Ladies Day with the rowdiness of Newcastle on a Saturday night. At best, one could expect to return home with a new girlfriend, at worst with a bad hangover.

In Nebaj, I watched a woman weaving a headcloth on a hand loom on the veranda of her house, mesmerised by the speed of her fingers dancing back and forth between the weft and the weave. In Todos Santos, I fell in with a party of cowboys in a backstreet bar who seemed to think – let's blame my appalling Spanish and their slightly inebriated state – that I was a horse dealer. Todos Santos plays host to a wild annual horse race that makes Siena's Palio look like a children's pony club. In Aguacatán, I fought off evangelical missionaries who had clearly spotted some moral failing in my demeanour (I put it down to the floral shirt, a mistake perhaps, but the last clean thing at the bottom of my bag). In Sacapulas, a budgie told my fortune by choosing a slip of paper from a spinning carousel. The bird was on the side of the missionaries. 'Beware Your Moral Health,' the slip read.

At Chichicastenango, I learned to eat a mango without slicing or peeling it: the flesh is massaged and the whole thing is sucked



out through a small incision in the top. Food told us a lot about the Maya. Among the vast bowls of guacamole, the tortilla and bean paste, corn is not just a staple, it is life itself, the essence of mankind. They say that the Mayan gods needed three goes at creating man. The first attempt were the mud people, until they realised mud was too soft to stay upright. Next they tried wood, but the wood people were too stiff and creaky. Finally they hit upon milled maize. The corn people turned out just right. The corn people are the Mayan ancestors.

On the road to Nebaj, I watched a young couple planting corn. He opened the earth with his hoe, and she dropped in a fat seed from the pockets of her skirt. As these mechanical movements were repeated, they acquired the character of a slow-motion dance, a kind of erotic two-step, up and down the rows of tilled earth. The couple were chanting as they went. 'They are invoking Chaac,' my guide said. 'The Mayan rain god. They are asking him to strike the clouds with his lightning stick to produce rain.'

But it was the women's dress that was the greatest legacy of the old civilisation. All across the highlands, women wore spectacular traditional costume – embroidered blouses, full-length skirts, bright sashes, vibrant shawls, all woven on hand looms with an elegance that has made them artworks in Western galleries. The shades and patterns varied from village to village, but the essentials were the same: intricate work in startlingly beautiful colours.

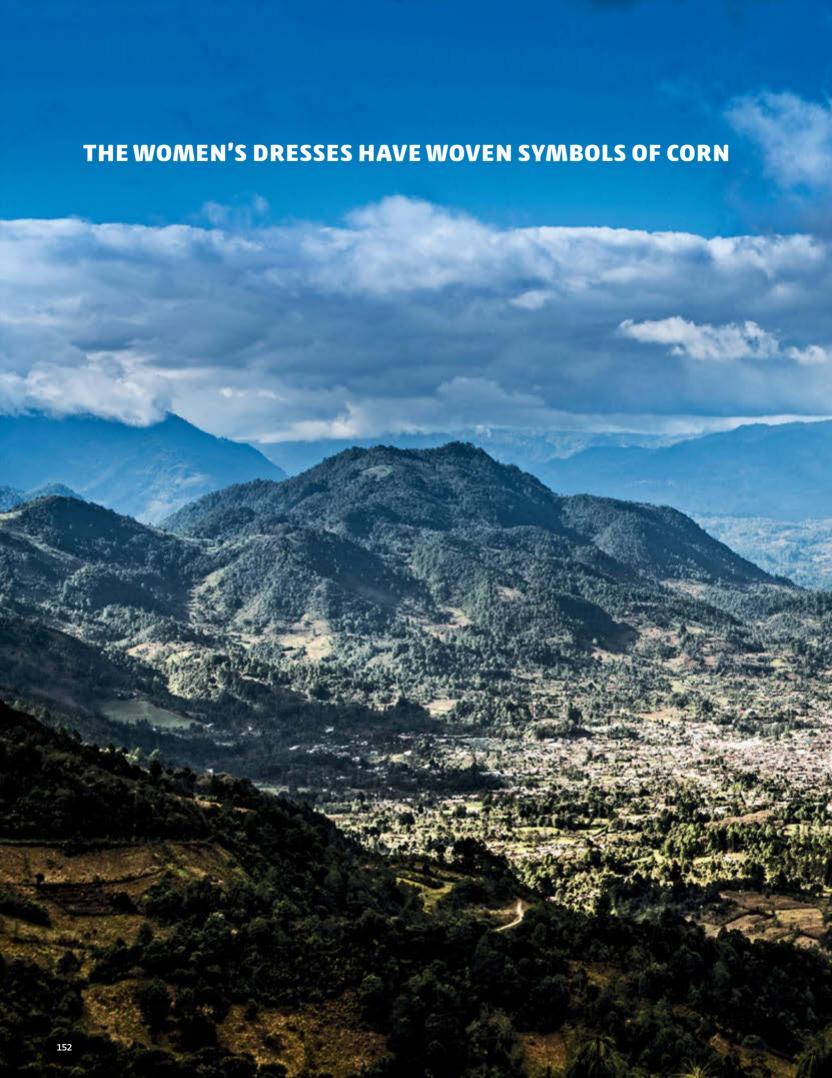
These creations were never merely decorative. Into the dense patterns are woven meanings, a narrative of symbols signifying

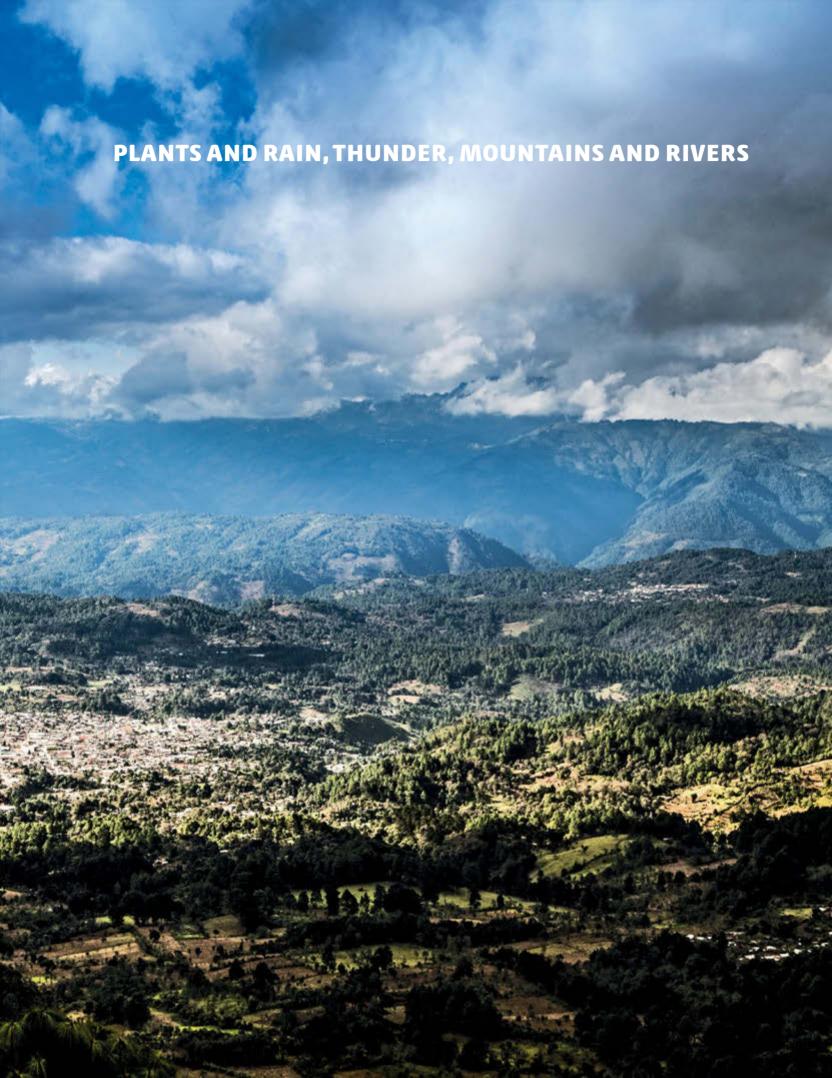
rain and thunder, mountains and rivers, corn plants and people. There are fertility symbols of wombs and religious representations of the *nahual*, the animal counterparts – dogs, turkeys, jaguars, pumas – to which the wearer's life force is linked, and into which humans can transform themselves. In the highlands the old beliefs and the old gods are as powerful as ever.

In Chajul, in an area known as the Ixil Triangle, the old gods seemed to have taken over. It might have been a Christian festival, part of the celebrations for Lent, but you'd be forgiven for thinking you were in the forecourt of a Mayan temple.

Crowds of women in traditional dress descended on the whitewashed church, climbing the steep steps where the shamans were chanting prayers that would once have been heard on the high terraces of the temple pyramids. Inside I found a great sea of candles filling the nave with smoke. Women prostrated themselves before altarpieces where corn gods cavorted with the Archangel and the great Sun God illuminated a bloodied Christ. In a side aisle, several hundred people queued to have their sprigs of camomile, rosemary and dried chrysanthemums blessed at the high altar. Brewed as tea, they would be used as cures, a Mayan belief receiving its blessing in a Catholic church.

Amid the suffocating odour of candle wax, incense and rum, the old man was recounting his life in a rambling monologue. Casual, conversational, discursive, he might have been chatting to an indulgent friend. He complained about the crops and the weather almost like a teasing reprimand. He admitted a few







# ALONG THE ROAD FARMERS WERE SCYTHING HAY AND PEOPLE WERE TAKING PIGS FOR A WALK ON LONG LEASHES

'bad' thoughts about that Nadia, and grew a bit tearful talking about his late wife. He laughed, he pleaded, he promised to try to do his best, and he hoped he might be granted a couple more years. This was the way he talked to God.

I don't know which God, of course, but I felt he was looking far beyond the crucifix to the older symbols that had infiltrated everywhere: the corn people lurking in the altarpiece, the figures of the Earth Mother carved amid the vines, the Sun and the Moon shining above the heavens. He knew who would understand him, and who would be waiting for him when his time was up.

For More Than 30 Years in the Late 20th Century, Guatemala suffered a civil war that could be seen as a continuation of the original conquest. The guerrilla army was largely indigenous and the government forces were mainly Latino. Democracy of a sort arrived in 1985, and peace accords were finally signed just over 10 years later. Although the war touched many people's lives, for the visitor it can feel as remote as a Mayan ruin. These days Guatemala is not only at peace, it is usually recognised as the one of the safest countries in Latin America for travellers.

One ravishing afternoon my guide took me to the valley of Acul, where he had once been stationed as a soldier. The road

wound past farmsteads of meditating cows and maize. Farmers were scything hay, and people were taking their pigs for a walk on long leashes. At the end of the road we came to a splendid, bowl-like valley entirely surrounded by high mountain peaks.

Joined to the outside world by a single track, Acul felt unreal, and even now I wonder if I have dreamt it. It is a pastoral paradise of sheep-cropped pastures, babbling rivers, wild flowers and big shade trees. War in this place was impossible to imagine.

We were at Mil Amores, a farm-stay run by a third-generation Italian family from Piedmont, the only European settlers in the valley. Their grandfather, taking a ship for the New World in the early 1900s, had found a delightful replica of the landscape that he had left behind in the Alps.

In the evening, sitting outside with a splendid cassoulet and a bottle of Cabernet, we watched the fireflies blinking in the trees like wayward Christmas lights while the sound of cow bells drifted up from the fields below. In the morning, from the porch of my little bungalow, I looked up at the early sun striking the peaks, and down at the night mists still swathing the village.

There are many reasons to come to Guatemala – famous ruins, colonial cities, volcanic lakes – but on this delicate morning, I felt the otherworldliness of Acul was reason enough.

Above, from left: a mother and child in Aguacatán; interior of a café near the Santa Catalina Arch in Antigua. Opposite, the fruit-and-vegetable market in Chichicastenango. Previous pages, a panoramic view from the mountain road to Nebaj

### WHERE TO STAY

### SAN RAFAEL HOTEL, ANTIGUA

For its three American owners, the San Rafael is not just a business, it is a private passion, and they keep apartments here for their own use. The seven-suite property, in a renovated Spanish-colonial mansion, reflects their international tastes, with Persian carpets, South-east-Asian figures, Chinese ceramics and Moorish tiles setting off the Guatemalan textiles and outlandish Antiguan ecclesiastical paintings. It has something of the character of a Moroccan riad - that sense of an inner world opening like an oasis away from the hot streets. The whole house is turned inwards on gardens of cypresses, figs, blossoms and fountains. Shuttered windows, canopied beds, adobe walls and stunning modern art all help make this not just a style guru's dream but a romantic retreat. Head up to the roof terrace for a majestic view of the volcano rearing above the town. www.the san rafaelhotel.com. Doubles from about £105

### **PALACIO DE DONA LEONOR, ANTIGUA**

Built in the 16th century, barely 50 years after Columbus sailed the ocean blue, this is one of the most famous houses in Guatemala, once the home of the daughter of the Spanish conqueror, Don Pedro de Alvarado, and his Mayan princess, Tecuilhuatzin. Five centuries on, it has lost little of its dignified atmosphere. The galleries on the first floor, with their baronial sofas, religious statues and vistas of the gardens and courtyard fountains, are just the place to consider the future of the colonies over a couple of dry sherries before nipping into your cool, high-ceilinged room for a long bath and a romp with a young lover. Discreet maids hustle about in starched aprons and serious waiters bear refreshing drinks and news of the latest outrage by English pirates. To lighten the atmosphere, there is an Italian gelato pushcart in the arched entrance. www. palaciodeleonor.com. Doubles from about £100

### CASA PALOPO, ATITLAN

When Aldous Huxley first saw Lake Atitlán, he came over all poetic. In the shadow of three colossal volcanoes, it was, he declared, the most beautiful lake one could ever find, far more lovely than the more famous Italian lakes. The ideal vantage to admire Lake Atitlán and her shifting moods are the terraces of Casa Palopó, the best lodge on its shores. This place has an ethnic-chic vibe, in keeping with the highlands: lots of native woods, naïf paintings, gorgeous textiles and walls given over to bold blocks of colour - Mediterranean blues and red madders. Rooms are spacious and each one has its own private deck. In the evenings the hotel is full of candlelight. A fire burns in the hearth and dinner is served in the 6.8 Palopó restaurant on a terrace above the moonlit lake. There are numerous

excursions around the area (the cult of 'evil' Saint Maximón in Santiago is one of the strangest things I have ever seen), but frankly I would have been happy to spend the whole day on the sundeck by the lap pool watching the changing face of the water. www.casapalopo. com. Doubles from about £135

### **HACIENDA MIL AMORES, ACUL**

Accommodation in the highlands never really gets beyond basic. Which is not to say it can't be delightful. Mil Amores is an alpine farm – neat, prosperous and picturesque – in one of the most beautiful valleys in Central America. At the top of a meadow next to the main house are four

one-room chalets, framed by flowerbeds and birdsong. They are clean and comfortable, and the morning views from the front door of the valley wreathed in mists and enclosed by mountains may just make you forget about the lack of room service. Meals are served at the farmhouse, usually outside overlooking pastures of placid cows. The food miles can be measured in paces, as most of the ingredients are from the farm. +502 3072 9878. Doubles from about £30

## UNICORNIO AZUL, SIERRA DE LOS CUCHUMATANES

As at Mil Amores, location here is everything. Unicornio Azul – the Blue Unicorn – is a ranch with a fine stable of 13 horses in big-sky country near Chiantla in the Cuchumatanes range. There are rooms in the main house, a spacious redroofed, white-washed building straight out of *The High Chaparral*, as well as several guest cabins spread around the property. Everyone

eats together at a long table in the ranch house, and the conversations around the fireplaces are one of the pleasures of the place, given that almost anyone who gets here is bound to be interesting. The other pleasure is riding; the French owner runs marvellous equestrian itineraries in this high plateau. But there is something else, Unicornio's great surprise: walk 15 minutes up through the pine woods just above the house and you come out suddenly on a ridge with a vast panorama stretching from the farmsteads just beneath you to the volcanoes of Atitlán, like ghosts on a distant horizon. www. unicornioazul.com. Doubles from about £40

### **LAS LAGUNAS, PETEN**

The northern district of Petén is home to most of Guatemala's great Mayan ruins and, outside of Antigua, has the best places to stay in the country. Las Lagunas is a new property amid dense rainforest on the shores of a tranquil lagoon. The large villas have the feel of a houseboat, with varnished wood, wide windows and screened terraces. that extend over the water. There are boat trips around the lodge's 200-acre nature reserve where the glamorous birds will make you wonder why we make such a fuss of blue tits and where, if you are lucky, you might spot a puma in the shadows. At night crack open a bottle of wine and sit in your own Jacuzzi to watch the fireflies and listen to the chorus of frogs. www.las lagunashotel.com. Doubles from about £225

### LA LANCHA, PETEN

A big fan of Central America, Francis Ford Coppola has three lodges in Guatemala and Belize; La Lancha, if you believe the well-drilled staff, is his favourite. Ten cabanas sit on the steep shores of Lake Petén, four with lake views and six with jungle views – from the latter you can watch the squirrel monkeys cavorting among the branches as you sip your morning tea. A little on the small size, the

cabanas are a rustic blend of limestone, thatch, red tiles, Guatemalan textiles and exuberant jungle. Hammocks are the way to go here, snoozing on the veranda overlooking the lake. La Lancha reflects Coppola's passions. The restaurant serves his Californian wine – the Rosso Classico is a great blend of Zinfandel, Shiraz and Cabernet grapes. And the menu is eclectic. Don't leave without trying the chilaquilas, tortillas stuffed with beef and pork, dipped in egg batter and served with red and green sauces. www.coppolaresorts.com/lalancha. Doubles from about £280 **SS** 

### **GETTING THERE**

The Ultimate Travel Company (+44 20 3051 8098; www.theultimatetravelcompany.com) offers a 12-day trip for £3,985 per person, including two nights each in Antigua, Casa Palopó, Unicornio Azul and Hacienda Mil Amores, one night in La Lancha, most meals, a private car and driver throughout, and flights from Heathrow



# JEFF BRIDGES

The Oscar-winning actor and passionate country musician, best known for his cult dressing-gown-wearing role in *The Big Lebowski*, gets spooky in a new fantasy film

# Where have you just come back from?

Seattle, at the end of a four-week tour with my band The Abiders. It's a wonderful town and I've done several films there: *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, *American Heart* and *The Vanishing*. A very dear friend, a guy named Richard Peterson, lives there and often opens for my band. He's a very eccentric cat. Google 'Big City Dick' – he's the bomb.

# Where in the world have you felt happiest?

In Santa Barbara, California, where I live. We shipped out of LA 20 years ago after that big ridge earthquake and it's beautiful. When you look out at the ocean, you're looking south, not west like in LA, so that means the weather is different. You're only 100 miles away, but it seems like it's in a completely different country because of the way the light hits the water.

# Name a place that most lived up to the hype

The Biltmore hotel in Santa Barbara. One of the downsides of living up in the mountains is there's a lot of sage brush and so a lot of fires. My wife, Susan, has had to evacuate the house three times on her own when I was away doing movies and she stayed at The Biltmore. It's beautiful.

# And a place that least lived up to the hype

Fortunately, I have dumped that info from my brain pan.

### Which is your road most travelled?

Between Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. But I try to do it as little as possible because the traffic just drives me crazy. It's a tough go.

# Sightseeing or sun lounger, barefoot or bling?

I'm both a sightseer and a lounger, but barefoot for both.

### What do you pack first?

Underpants.

# Describe a memory from a childhood holiday

Getting my first bicycle in Mar Vista, LA when I was about eight, and having my brother Beau teach me how to ride it.

# Where did you go on your first holiday without your parents?

Big Sur, California. I had just got my licence and I drove up the coast by myself and stayed at Deetjen's Big Sur Inn. It's one of the funkier places and very romantic. Have you ever been to Big Sur? It's like a magical kingdom in another realm.

### I MET MY WIFE IN 1974. SHE WAS WORKING AT A DUDE RANCH. IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

### Describe a holiday disaster

This one's happened a number of times. Going on a much-anticipated vacation and then getting sick or ill. It's kind of disappointing, but I do my best to get with the programme and be sick as happily as I can.

# Tell us about a great little place you know

The Sacred Space in Summerland, California, a couple of miles south of Santa Barbara. It's a private retreat owned by Jack Herschorn and his wife Rose, and they're lovely. They hold meditation seminars and have a beautiful garden with rock pools and streams. It's also where I do my Christmas shopping.

### 'I lost my heart in ...'

Livingston, Montana, where I met my wife on the set of *Rancho Deluxe* back in 1974. She was working at the dude ranch where we were shooting and it was love at first sight. I finally got up my nerve to ask her out for a date, and she said no. Then we met again in a bar and we danced. We got married about three years later.

### 'I would never, ever go back to...'

Everything is worth a second shot, right?

# Confess to one thing you've taken from a hotel room

A pen. Have you heard of the term *schnorrer*? It's a Yiddish word for a person who takes advantage of things that might be free, like pens or soap. My mum would cross the line, taking robes and towels and linens, and she prided herself on being a *schnorrer*.

# Who is the most interesting person you've encountered on your travels?

Bernie Glassman. He's a zen master I met 15 years ago, and he's wonderful and down-to-earth. We wrote a book together called *The Dude and the Zen Master*.

# Which foreign phrase do you use most often?

Ich bin ein Schauspieler.

### What's your guilty pleasure?

A good cigar.

# What would you most like to find in your mini-bar?

Cashews.

# Nominate your Eighth Wonder of the World

Susan Bridges.

### How do you relax?

I meditate and take walks. I've been meditating for about 15 years. It's a continual challenge, but the process itself is pretty simple: being aware and being in the present.

Jeff Bridges was speaking to Francesca Babb. He stars in 'Seventh Son', released on 27 March



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# THE EXPERTS

This month's Health Books Gadgets Advice

EDITED BY STEVE KING & EMMA LOVE



of Soho House). There are classes on particular skills and themes – bread, pastry, planning an Easter-break menu – but the emphasis is always on real-life situations and seasonality. 'You should be able to fit food around your life, not the other way around. Nobody's got the time for that. We're trying to show that you can shake things up, be refreshed and invigorated.' www.kitchentablecookery.co.uk STEVE KING

OTOGRAPH: EATONANDWOODS.COM

# THE FOCUS...

# SAY NOTHING AT ALL

Everyone feels the urge to fill an uncomfortable silence with chatter and, in our fast-paced, adrenalin-fuelled lives, we often talk over others rather than listening to what they have to say. But what if we just shut up? On a silent retreat at one of India's top yoga destinations, Catherine Turner learns that quietness can have tumultuous results



EALLY, YOU AREN'T going to speak for five whole days?' That's the reaction I got when I told those around me I was going on a silent retreat. Most of them could not contemplate the idea. But it had been on my mind for a while. Now here I was, thousands of miles from home, just outside Bangalore at Shreyas, a serene set-up loved by in-the-know yogis, saying my final goodnight to fellow diners before beginning my silence the next day.

My mind churned with last-minute nerves, then I remembered what Balaji Nanabala, the jolly CEO, had told me at the end of the meditation session earlier that day – *mouna*, the Sanskrit for silence, is a rare opportunity to listen to oneself.

The path which had brought me to that moment was a long and winding one, part of a yoga journey that had started 15 years before. Initially, it was a physical practice that improved my flexibility, helped me relax and enhanced my wellbeing. The more I practised, the more I was drawn to the inner peace it brought, and I began to realise that the postures (*asanas*) are the starting point to prepare body and mind for sitting in silent meditation, ultimately leading us to achieve that sense of calm.

Glimpses of this deeper stillness made me want to experience more at a silent retreat, and there are many options. For example, *vipassana*, an ancient Buddhist technique which has been made popular in recent years by SN Goenka. But 10 days of sitting from 4.30am to 9pm, stopping only for meals and lectures with not even a pen and paper as a distraction, seemed extreme.

In the end, I decided on Shreyas because it is held within a framework of yogicashram discipline (early-morning *asana* classes, meditation and chanting, vegetarian My Garden Tent room was also a great haven, more a lovely cottage with a canvas roof and a design that hit just the right balance of calming and haute-hippie. It had a kingsize bed, an outdoor shower and a private, walled terrace.

That first morning, I found myself a little discombobulated, counting the minutes until the yoga class at 6.30am. It was a one-to-one session and, had I been speaking, I'd have asked a million questions and made unnecessary comments. In yogic terms, words without thought behind them are a waste of vital energy (*prana*) and I could feel the difference immediately: I was able to stay focused throughout the class.

years ago that month). Then, the headstand I attempted in yoga class sent a wave of fear, anger and grief over me. I let out uncontrollable sobs as I came down to rest. But as fast as the wave hit me, it subsided.

This was the pattern for the rest of my time in silence: huge rushes of emotion followed by release. Although painful on every level, I knew it was cathartic, as if all the hurt and sadness I'd bottled up over the years was being eked out bit by bit. I quickly learned to not be afraid of the emotions, but to allow them to rise and subside in the stillness of meditation.

It was a great lesson in observing the workings of mind and body. I noticed

# A HEADSTAND IN YOGA CLASS SENT A MASSIVE WAVE OF FEAR, ANGER AND GRIEF OVER ME

Afterwards, as I entered the dining room for breakfast, another little panic pang hit me. Sociable seating was set out around a table for the other guests. Mine was in the corner set for one, as I was solo in being silent (the programme is optional). My discomfort was momentary though; everyone smiled in acknowledgement. The size of the place helps – there are only 14 rooms – and silence is respected by guests and staff alike. I sat down and studied the thought-for-the-day card in front of me, which stated that eating without speaking improves digestion. I said a prayer to myself in thanks for the food I was about to eat (as per the card's instructions) and looked at the table setting: there were flowers from the garden, fresh fruit, a jug of dark-purple beet juice, cereals, nuts and honey. I ate slowly and felt truly satisfied.

I slipped easily into the routine of twice-daily yoga, meditation and chanting sessions, Ayurvedic massage, walking niggly twangs in my lower back, neck and shoulders seemed to coincide with the rising up of emotions. It wasn't the type of pain you might get by carrying a heavy bag or picking up a box, but more subtle, a nerve-like sensation, which, if I sat in silence, would fade away with the feelings.

At Shreyas there is a spiritually supportive atmosphere, which makes it feel safe to let go, as well as a sense of giving back. The grounds, a 25-acre former coconut farm, include an organic fruit-and-vegetable plot. One of the highlights of my stay was helping to pick vegetables for lunch, which we served to children at an orphanage that was built by the retreat.

It turned out that not talking was the easy part. When it came to the end, I could have carried on in silence. My body felt cleansed; a week of eating in peace had calmed my stressed digestive system. My brain was still whirling when I left, but with a new perspective on making sense of it all. I now have more space in my head to think, and more clarity when it comes to making tough decisions. Of course, there is a place for talking about problems, but finding peace of mind is our own responsibility. It takes time alone to unravel uncomfortable feelings and reset priorities. Next year, I'm signing up for 10 days.

peace of mind is our own responsibility. Itakes time alone to unravel uncomfortable feelings and reset priorities. Next year, I'm signing up for 10 days.

Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3597; www.healingholidays.co.uk) offers a seven-night silent retreat at Shreyas from £2,095 per person based on two people sharing (or £2,695 for singles), full board, including a wellness consultation, personal

yoga and meditation sessions, daily group

activities, massages, flights and transfers

# THEY SAY THAT WORDS WITHOUT THOUGHT BEHIND THEM ARE A WASTE OF VITAL ENERGY

food, no alcohol, no smoking), an extension of the practices I had tried before, so it seemed less daunting. Alongside yoga, the Ayurvedic doctors recommend treatments such as the Abhyanga massage, which improves sleep with herbal oils, to support you during the process, and also make dietary adjustments. All of this in a setting that has a shimmering turquoise pool, a neat spa and steam rooms, and secluded spots. I loved the beautiful little treehouse at the end of the garden, strewn with marigold flowers and floral-print cushions.

in the beautiful gardens and reading the recommended books, including *Spirituality: Transformation from Within & Without* by Swami Rama, a great overview of why we so often feel empty in a world where our spiritual side is frequently ignored. I wrote notes asking for anything I needed – incense for the room, tea after my meal. I felt great physically and floated about in a state of peacefulness. I couldn't stop smiling.

By day two, I was on an emotional rollercoaster. I'd woken up feeling sad at the loss of my dad (he had passed away two



# SHELF IMPROVEMENT By Giles Foden



Not since Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's classic *Vol de Nuit*, which described his experiences as an airmail pilot and director of an Argentinian airline, has there been such a fantastic book about flying as Mark Vanhoenacker's **Skyfaring: A Journey with a Pilot** (Chatto & Windus, £16.99). Now a senior first officer for British Airways, the author is unusual in that he came to flying late (he was formerly a management consultant) and has a wide range of cultural references, quoting as appositely from Wordsworth as from Joni Mitchell ('I dreamed of 747s...'). What marks this book out is its author's ability to bring a genuine poetic sensibility to the experience of flying and the feelings of strangeness and

beauty that it engenders. In a series of chapters with titles such as 'Lift', 'Air' and 'Wayfaring', Vanhoenhacker develops some intriguing concepts, such as 'place lag' – that is, 'the imaginative drag that results from our jet-age displacements over every kind of distance, from the inability of our deep old sense of place to keep up with our aeroplanes'. He writes incisively about the almost 'permanent mediation of glass' that now dominates airports, describing his dumbfoundment on arriving in Honolulu, a rare exception in being open-sided. And there's a section on the smells of different cities that rise into the cockpit in the last minutes before landing (Delhi is smoky; Boston salty). The book was clearly written in the downtime between flights, in hotels or while resting on board an airliner between shifts; structurally there's a clever and unusual modulation between the fine description of these moments and other types of writing.

Vanhoenacker's insights are equally compelling when he's talking about technical matters such as Mach numbers, which are dimensionless, enabling pilots to keep the aerodynamic conditions the same, wherever and whenever they are (because the speed of sound varies with temperature). This is essentially a question of relativity, a subject on which this book is particularly good, giving lyrical voice to something ('Now that day has turned away into the past, and the city, London, lies well beyond the curve of the planet') which is not just about travel but is a condition of modernity.

Besides Saint-Exupéry, I already had some favourite books on this subject, including Henry Sutton's novel *Flying*, which focuses on seven characters crewing an airliner on a long-haul return flight between London and New York, and the repercussions of a wild party in a hotel, and Graham Coster's anthology of aviation writing, *The Wild Blue Yonder*; but *Skyfaring* takes the genre to a whole new level. I found myself turning over the corners of almost every page with excitement and admiration.

### THE GREATEST BOOK ON EARTH

### Tim Parks nominates 'Arturo's Island' by Italian novelist Elsa Morante



'The volcanic island of Procida rises like a promise of paradise in the Bay of Naples. Here, entirely alone but for his faithful dog Immacolatella, Arturo grows up in a world of lush vegetation, sparkling sea and blinding sunshine. His teenage mother died giving

birth to him, his wayward but adored father has abandoned him in an ex-monastery since renamed the House of Rascals, full of old books about mythical heroes. The opening chapters offer an idyllic evocation of a coastal boyhood as Arturo roams and swims and fantasises the heroic life

ahead of him. It's a beauty to die for. Then the father returns with a new child bride and a morbid interest in what we now realise is a fortress prison way up on the island's high plateau. Soon Arturo will be head over heels in love with his stepmother

and forced to confront his father's bisexuality. Elsa Morante was up there with the greats of the 20th century and this gives the glories and horrors of the Italian mindset as no other novel I know.'

Tim Parks' 'Italian Ways: On and Off the Rails from Milan to Palermo' and his new novel, 'Painting Death', are published by Harvill Secker



# TOURIST INFORMATION FOR THE OWL AND THE DUSSYCAT



The Land Where the Bong-Tree Grows is a perennial favourite as a honeymoon destination or wedding venue for those who consider Bora Bora a little too familiar. Its progressive marriage laws attract some unconventional partnerships. However, as the land takes a year and a day to reach by boat, many relationships do not last the voyage.

WHAT TO DO The journey's part of the experience, so you'll need plenty to entertain yourself – star-gazing, singing, composing limericks, etc. Once there, parties can be wild, with dancing in the moonlight. Food includes mince and quince, but not turkey.

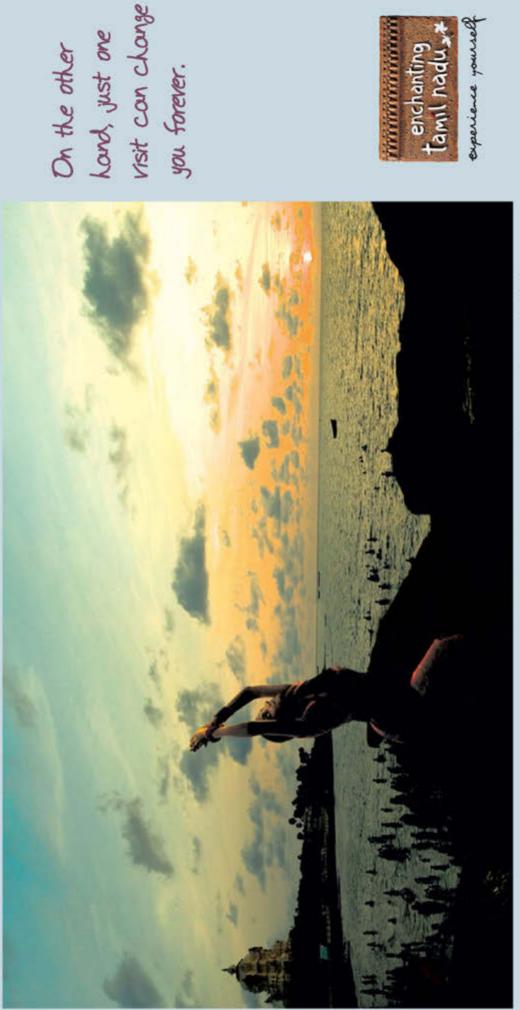
### WHAT TO PACK

1 Honey 2 Plenty of money3 A small guitar 4 Cat litter5 Wedding ring (though one can be bought from a local piggy-wig)

### **GENERAL ADVICE**

Conveniently, pre-decimal UK money is legal tender here (for safety, wrap loose change in a £5 note). The country may be unsuitable for those with an animal-hair allergy or an aversion to nonsense. RICK JORDAN

# Things haven't changed much here for a few thousand years.



Suryanamaskar, a yogic ritual, being performed at Rameswaram, Tamilnadu

experience yourself

enchanting Tamil nadux

# Tamil Nadu Tourism



# GEEK GEAR By George Duffield

Modern travel inevitably involves the bitter paradox of wishing to escape and needing to stay in touch. Managing connectivity and how you access the internet, your music and photos is central to a pleasant holiday (and a happy partner). Get it right, or waste a fortune and be heavily chastised for it



### **UE BOOM SPEAKER**

The Geek has a thing for music on the go. Most of the speakers on the market suck, seriously. But the UE Boom is winning awards everywhere. It's loud, it's neat, it syncs with other UE Booms to spread the sound around and it's not too expensive. www.ultimateears.com; £169

### KARMA PORTABLE WIFI

Nothing kills the joy of travel quicker than a colossal data bill. The battery-powered Karma device is tiny, like a pebble, and uses 4G for speed. It costs \$14 per gig of data across the USA, never expires and there's no subscription. A must for anyone going on a transatlantic trip. www.yourkarma.com; about £95

# HYPERDRIVE COLORSPACE UDMA2

This is a beast: a Wi-Fi-enabled backup device that can read CF and SD cards and comes with up to 1GB of internal storage. If you know you're going to be shooting a lot of photos or video, this is the device for you.

www.hypershop.com; about £300

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www.brunton.com; about £16



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### THIS YEAR VOTING IS ONLINE ONLY. MAKE IT COUNT

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I have been invited to a 50th-birthday party in Antibes, but have heard that the French Riviera is past its best. Does anywhere there still have any glamour left?

A

The Esterel and Alpes-Maritimes region has changed enormously, its string of coastal villages having turned into an intimidating ribbon of conurbation in the past 50 years. Yet in places – and Antibes is one – the old charm can reassert itself. For a pre-party cocktail, take a taxi to the edge of neighbouring Juan-les-Pins and the Hôtel Belles Rives (Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald stayed here in 1925), which has the finest Art Deco terrace and interior I know. The Cap d'Antibes remains a private place, but is crisscrossed with pine-saturated walks, at the end of which is the ideal spot for a

morning-after swim: the Plage de la Garoupe. The 'bright tan prayer rug of a beach' in Fitzgerald's Tender is the Night now draws the new Russian aristocracy, sometimes with their children in Romanov sailor suits. After a dip, double back to the bottom of the old town for lunch at Le Safranier, just below the Picasso Museum. The fish dishes (grilled bass, flambéed prawns) and fleurs de courgettes are served on a shaded, airy terrace, behind stone battlements, where conversation and contemplation are local, simple, beyond the reach of international phenomena, and still intensely redolent of 'the carnival by the sea'.



JULIAN EVANS CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Q

What is the safest way to carry my passport, credit cards and cash?



An abiding memory of growing up in foreign embassies was the steady pageant of distressed British nationals who appeared at the consular window to protest that they had been robbed of their passport and wallet. In Peru, gangs of boys were adept in razor-slashing your money-belt without disturbing a hair on your head as you ambled around Cuzco's Plaza de Armas; Fagin could have taught them nothing. The same went on, with the merest variations, in Argentina, Brazil and Morocco. It's why I commend, unstintingly if unsexily (though what can be less sexy than being stripped of the means to make it home?), an elasticated bandage called a Tubigrip, available from Boots

at all British airports for around £3. Doubled-up on your leg under the trousers, the Tubigrip turns into a kangaroo-pouch where you may tuck your valuables and feel no anxiety about them again. It was recommended to me by John Hatt, author of that matchless compendium of travel tips, *The Tropical Traveller*, and I have worn one without mishap for 30 years. Or almost without



NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

mishap. Make sure you get a bandage that fits. On a recent visit to Cuba I carelessly bought the nearest Tubigrip, not bothering to read its size – aimed, it turned out, at those with 'small knees' – and almost suffered a stroke as a result.

### Street food scares me. Should I be afraid?



You lucky, lucky man. What a world of gastronomic pleasure awaits you. Good street food is the throbbing soul of a country's culinary culture, a place where rough edges and glorious flavours explode on the palate like brilliantly edible pyrotechnics. Some of the finest tucker in the world is found deep among the fag smoke and petrol fumes of Asia and Latin America's seething metropolises. Searing green papaya salads from the backstreets of Bangkok, exquisite tacos al pastor from a rickety cart in a less than salubrious quarter of Mexico City, fragrant breakfast pho in Hanoi, stunning shawarmas in the byroads of Beirut. Pure bliss. Regarding safety, worry not. I've stuffed my gob with street for a quarter

of a century with no ill effects. In fact, you're more likely to catch a bug from a mediocre hotel salad. However, there are some ground rules. Always look for a queue, which means food will be turning over fast. Make sure everything is cooked to order in front of you. Don't worry about not speaking the lingo. Watch what the natives eat, point and smile. The vendors will be delighted you're sampling their wares and will be only too happy to help. In short, hit the street and get stuck in.



TOM PARKER BOWLES CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Apart from the Palio, what should I see in Siena?

A

The biannual horse race, with all its pomp, pageantry and theatrics, is only the beginning in magical, medieval Siena. It's one of very few complete walled cities – and is totally pedestrianised inside, save for a few two- and three-wheeled vehicles hurtling past you on the cobbled streets. Your first stop should be the main square, Piazza del Campo, Indeed, all roads leads to II Campo, where you can

marvel at the dizzying clock tower of the Museo Civico over a glass of prosecco and a bowl of pici, a local pasta that looks like fat spaghetti. Inside is Gothic artwork from 14th-century Sienese masters, who somehow missed the Renaissance that was happening down the road. Not to be missed is the Duomo, a feat of architecture in black and white marble that rivals Florence and Milan's in its unspoilt beauty, scale and splendour. Just to the east of the cathedral is the Duomo Nuovo, still a work in progress after building was shelved when plague struck in 1348. Although it is only a shell, there is a viewing tower here that

gives the most breathtaking views of Siena's

burnt-orange buildings and the rolling hills



PHOTOGRAPH: SLIM AARONS/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

of Chianti around them. The Orto de' Pecci and the Fortezza are well worth an afternoon visit; and I'd highly recommend making a beeline for Nannini on Via

Banchi di Sopra for a sweet slice of the local panforte.

Q

Why is the wine that seems so wonderful on holiday not so tasty when I drink the same thing in the UK?



This perennial question is not so innocent. It is not the wine that changes. It is the person drinking it. The holiday-maker slurping wine in a littoral paradise under a benign sun is not the person sitting at home with her feet up watching an old episode of Sex and the City. The same wine may be in the glass both times, but the principal actor is not the same personality; mindset and physical disposition are subtly altered.



MALCOLM GLUCK WRITER

This phenomenon is well known to professional wine buyers, who never make a decision to buy a wine when they taste it in the winery, hundreds, perhaps thousands of miles from home shores; they make their decision after they have experienced the same wine in the less seductive surroundings of the office. In the same way, I do not taste wine when I am grumpy. Three times in the past 10 years I have returned home from setting out to a wine tasting because of upsetting travel incidents. The bad taste left in my mouth was palpable. Mood is crucial to human perception of a wine. An indifferent wine can taste delicious if you haven't a care in the world and the sun is shining.

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# WHERE ARE YOU?

The daffodils may be blooming in England but in the eastern region of this mountain range – one of the highest and most inaccessible on the planet – it will still be winter, which lasts for more than eight months of the year. The temperature can drop as low as -63°C, and snowfall during the summer is not unusual. Neither are earthquakes. If you're tempted by the idea of a holiday here, the western

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region will be more appealing, with its almost balmy weather and pretty upland meadows grazed by herds of sheep. You might also spy a marmot, a snow leopard or even a brown bear – and, way up above the treeline, encounter a convoy of merchants negotiating the treacherous track, relying on sure-footed yaks to gain access to a lower valley. This was part of a major trading route for centuries, and the

convoy is following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, Marco Polo and Genghis Khan. Despite the incredible landscapes, this region is rarely visited by world leaders nowadays – but its isolation makes it ideal for escaping the nine-to-five. Where are you? TABITHA JOYCE

To enter, identify the mountain range where the photograph was taken. Correct answers will be placed in a random prize-draw. For prize details, please turn the page

1. Entries for the Where Are You? competition can be sent on a postcard, by email or online (stating your full name, address and telephone number), and must correctly identify the place described according to the instructions given. 2. Entries must arrive no later than the last day of the month on this issue's cover. 3. The Where Are You? competition is open to readers of Condé Nast Traveller who are 18 or older on the date of entry, except for employees of Condé Nast Publications, participating promotional agencies, contributors to Condé Nast Traveller, and the families of any of the above. 4. The winner will be announced at www.cntraveller.com/competitions. Entries by post should be sent to Where Are You? competition, Condé Nast Traveller, Vogue House, 1 Hanover Square, London W1S 1JU. Email entries should be sent to: compentraveller@ condenast.co.uk. To enter online and for full terms & conditions, visit www.cntraveller.com/competitions



# WHERE ARE YOU? COMPETITION PRIZE

WIN AN UNFORGETTABLE FAMILY HOLIDAY FOR FOUR WITH CLUB MED IN MAURITIUS



What will you do first? Head straight to that white-sand beach and stretch out on a canopied day-bed, or take the children hunting around the cacti and tamarind trees to find a ruined fort? There are many adventures to be had at **La Plantation d'Albion Club Med**, from learning to use a flying trapeze to big-game fishing and kayaking on the nearby creeks – as well as a full range of brilliantly supervised kids'-club activities. When you need to pause for breath, the Cinq Mondes spa, beach bar and various restaurants beckon.

Enter this month's Where Are You? competition and you could win a seven-night holiday here for a family of four. The prize, worth £8,000, includes accommodation in interconnecting Club rooms, all inclusive (with drinks), as well as return Air Mauritius flights from London and transfers. The holiday must be taken by 31 December 2015, subject to availability, excluding dates over Christmas and New Year. For details, contact Club Med (www.clubmed.co.uk)

## THIS MONTH'S READER OFFER

Save 15 per cent on a week's holiday at Raffles Praslin Seychelles

HE ISLAND OF PRASLIN has been both compared to and confused with the Garden of Eden – not surprising when you encounter the rare wildlife, coco de mer trees and unspoilt beauty of the Vallée de Mai, a World Heritage Site. Condé Nast Traveller readers have the chance to see this for themselves while saving 15 per cent on a seven-night stay, with an upgrade to an Ocean View Pool Villa, at the five-star **Raffles Praslin Seychelles** with **Turquoise** Holidays. The price, from £2,219 per person, includes flights, transfers and breakfast plus a Heidi Klein bikini, which you may like to show off in your villa or by one of the hotel's two main pools. This holiday must be booked by 1 May and taken before September 2015 (excluding 1-10 May and 17-25 July), subject to availability.

### FOR MORE DETAILS OR TO BOOK

Call Turquoise Holidays on +44 1494 678400, quoting *Condé Nast Traveller* Reader Offer, or visit www.turquoiseholidays.co.uk





### **GRAND PRIZE DRAW 2015**

A £5,000 trip on Qatar Airways to stay at the Four Seasons Hotel Doha

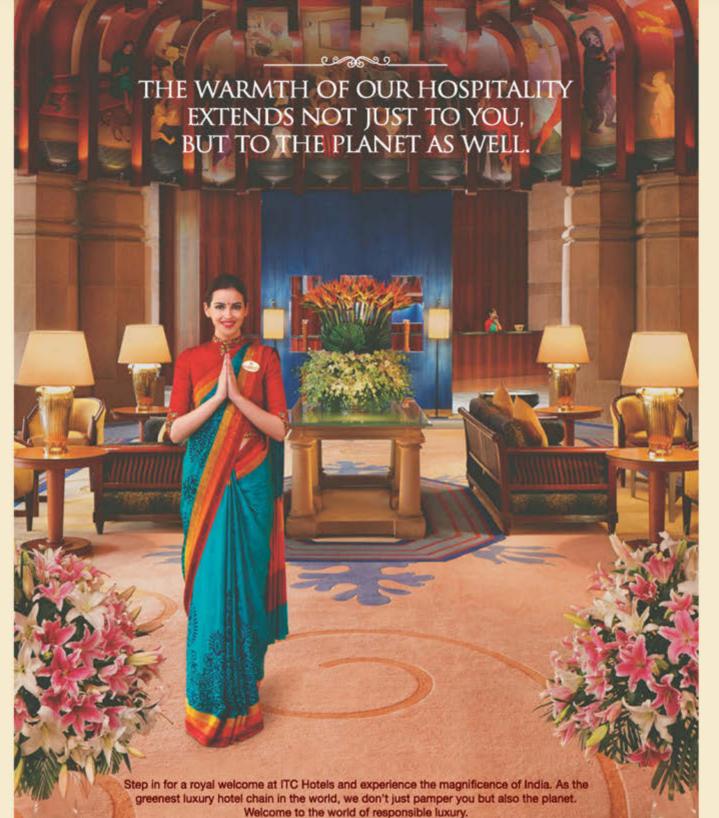
Ror The Past Year, entries to our Where Are You? competition have been pouring in. Thousands of *Condé Nast Traveller* readers have tried to pinpoint mystery locations ranging from a train station in Seoul to salt flats in Utah. Karen Ringer from Torquay, Devon is this year's winner, having identified our February 2014 puzzler as Tucson in Arizona.

She wins a five-night trip to Doha, flying off in style in Qatar Airways' new A380, the world's largest passenger jet which has unrivalled in-flight entertainment and top-class service. She will stay at the Four Seasons Hotel Doha; located in the city's West Bay, this Moorish-designed set-up is a fantasy world of latticework domes, geometric



patterns, arches and palms, with a private beach and spa. The prize, courtesy of **Qatar Airways** and **Four Seasons**, is worth about £5,000 and includes return flights to Doha. 'I'm over the moon,' said Karen when we called to let her know. 'My husband is not going to believe it. We haven't been away together in a couple of years and he is going to be thrilled.' For further information visit www.qatarairways.com and www.fourseasons.com/doha









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### THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Begin your journey at the capital city of New Delhi, amid intoxicating sights, sounds and smells, before retreating to the ITC Maurya. A favourite among world leaders, its sophisticated Buddhist stupa design

pays tribute to the great Mauryan Dynasty. The hotel also houses two of the city's most sought-after restaurants: Bukhara and Dum Pukht. Next stop is Agra, home to the Taj Mahal, where you will receive a royal welcome at the ITC Mughal. Winner of the prestigious Aga Khan award for its excellent representation of Mughal architecture, the hotel is an archetype of the ethos of the Mughal era. On to Jaipur, the 'Pink City' of India with the ITC Rajputana, which is designed to echo the region's traditional havelis with refined artistry that sublimely reflect the spirit of Rajasthan and its royalty. Complete your journey of the Golden Triangle at the ITC Grand Bharat in Gurgaon, ITC Hotels' newest offering and India's first all-suite luxury resort. Nestled in an idyllic setting, the resort offers luxurious living, elaborate culinary experiences, a royal spa, bespoke banqueting and a 27-hole signature Jack Nicklaus golf course.

### SOUTHERN SPLENDOUR

Start your journey in Chennai with the ITC Grand Chola, where the palatial design – inspired by the splendour of a glorious southern dynasty – creates an ideal retreat. Travel on to Bengaluru (Bangalore), the garden city of India, which beckons with its old world charm. Stay at either the ITC Gardenia, inspired by the magnificent gardens of the city or the aristocratic ITC Windsor, which evokes the days of the Raj. End your journey of southern India at Hyderabad and reflect upon the history of the Nizams, whilst experiencing the culture of the Kakatiya Dynasty with a stay at ITC Kakatiya.



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Commence your journey in western India at the cosmopolitan hub of Mumbai as you experience the region's vintage charm with the ITC Maratha that provides a reflection of the ethos and culture of the Maratha Dynasty. Alternately, experience the city's British colonial style, eloquently reflected in the architecture of the ITC Grand Central. Look east to Kolkata, and experience the heritage of Bengal with the ITC Sonar, India's first business resort, which captures the essence of the city through its greenery and water bodies, reminiscent of the garden houses of yesteryear.

For reservations and further information, visit itchotels.in/luxurysojourns





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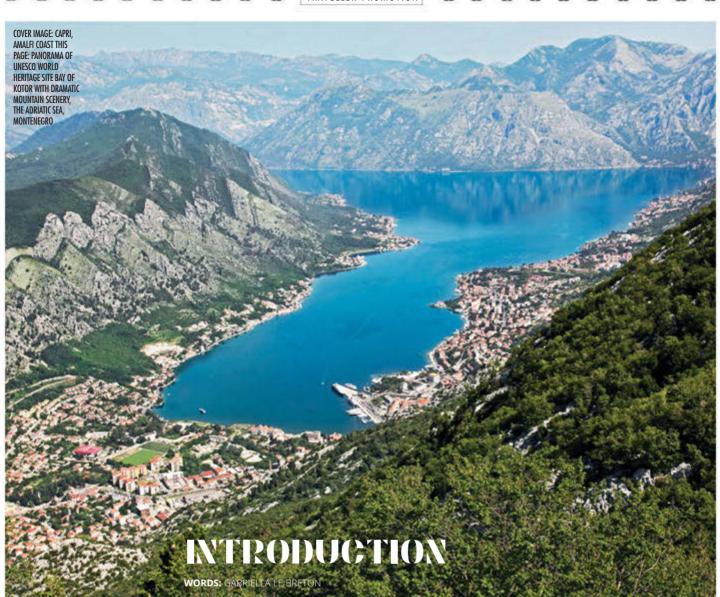




JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

# CALENDAR





e're willing to bet, no matter what you might think about cruising, that there is A Perfect Cruise out there for you. After all, the nearly 22 million people who took a cruise last year can't all be crazy, can they? And, with new ships popping up across the world's oceans and rivers like the daffodils in our hedgerows, travellers have a greater range of ships, destinations and options to choose from than ever before.

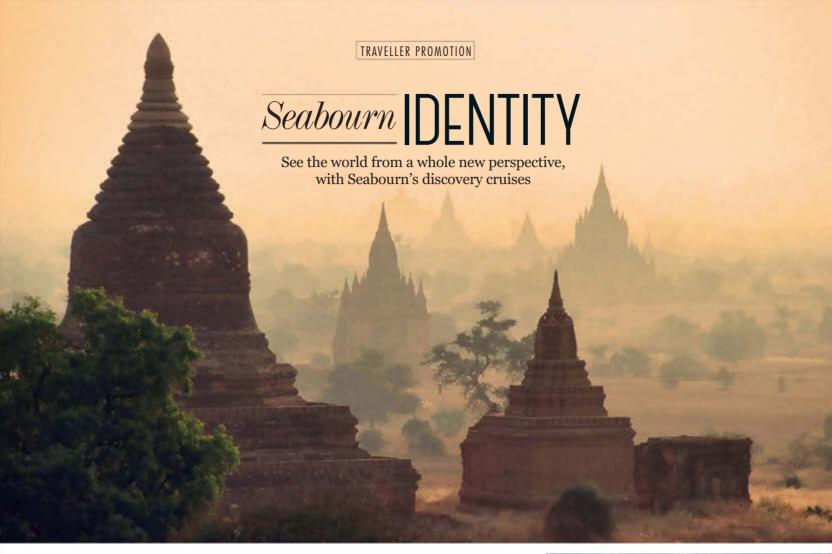
While exciting and liberating, this flourishing cruise world can also be bewildering, particularly to the uninitiated. Should you select a voyage based on the cruise line, the ship, the ports of call or what's included in your fare?

Do you appease your teenagers with a Mediterranean cruise aboard Royal Caribbean's all-singing, all-dancing Quantum class mega-ships or surprise your husband with a journey to the Antarctic aboard the plush Regent Seven Seas Explorer, due to launch next summer? You could treat yourself to a girlie spa and shopping break in the United Arab Emirates aboard Celebrity Cruises Constellation or a

romantic river cruise along the Danube on **Uniworld**'s brand new supership SS Maria Theresa. Engage your inner Française with a Mediterranean jaunt aboard **Ponant**'s chic new ship *Le Lyrial* or fly the Union Jack with pride aboard P&O's new Britannia, a celebration of the best of British with chefs James Martin, Marco Pierre White and Atul Kochhar and wine buff Olly Smith all delivering a culinary punch.



Go on, admit that you're impressed... Next year will see even more new ships hitting the Seven Seas, from the launch of Royal Caribbean's third 5,400-passenger Oasis class ship to Uniworld's 56-passenger Ganges Voyager II. This wave of new ships is not only ushering in unprecedented levels of luxury and opening up niche destinations but is also making cruising ever easier and more appealing for families, active types, the culturally curious and solo travellers. Whether you're a veteran or virgin cruiser, you can't fail to find a voyage that will tempt you out onto the water over the coming months, particularly as we've done the hard work for you, picking out the very best cruises for each month of the year.



he wind in your hair, the wide expanse of ocean around you, unbroken vistas of sea and sky as far as your eye can see – and then the sight of your next destination sending anticipatory quivers down your spine: when it comes to travelling the world, nothing elicits a greater sense of luxurious freedom than exploring by ship.

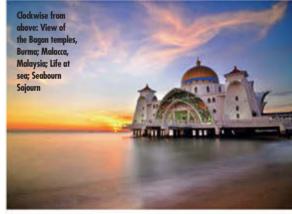
Especially when that ship is one of Seabourn's three sensational Odyssey-class ships – Seabourn Odyssey, Seabourn Sojourn and Seabourn Quest. Having received rave reviews, and acclaimed as 'game changers' when they entered service, the ships offer a sumptuous



all-inclusive lifestyle that has changed the face of luxury cruising. Think spacious suites, most with verandas, and superb dining in a choice of venues. Bars with a relaxed, sociable atmosphere and, with just 458 guests each, one of the highest ratios of space and staff per guest.

And then there are the boundary-breaking destinations. Take February 2016's Myanmar & Malaysia cruise: a 16-night round trip from Singapore, offering the ultimate experience for adventurers. The journey will include idyllic Phuket, Langkawi, Georgetown, Pulau Pangkor, Port Klang and Malacca – while three days in Thilawa's port will allow guests to explore Myanmar's marvels. Take in Rangoon's colonial architecture and 2,500-year-old Schwedagon Pagoda, with its huge gilded dome encrusted with 5,448 precious stones; Mandalay's enormous golden Buddha; Bagan plain's 2,000 temples and pagodas scattered beside the Irrawaddy River; and the ancient Mon capital of Bago, with its six stunning temples dominating the skyline.

Or perhaps the 'Pearls of the Philippines & Borneo' cruise, carrying guests from Hong Kong to Singapore, departing in April 2016. This 14-day itinerary will navigate the Philippines' scattered islands, before continuing to the mystical island of Borneo. At the Hundred Islands National Park, guests can explore the islands before swimming and snorkelling in idyllic blue seas. On the small island of Boracay, guests can relax in a picture-perfect tropical paradise. Then it's on to the beautiful 'green' city of Puerto Princesa, steeped in Spanish colonial history and boasting one of the world's longest navigable



underground rivers, a national park and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Indeed, thanks to its newly formed partnership with UNESCO, Seabourn is set to offer exclusive tours to over 160 World Heritage sites and ports around the globe. Specialist speakers will join the onboard 'Seabourn Conversations' programme, introducing guests to UNESCO's mission of identifying, safeguarding and promoting unique cultural and natural features around the world deemed to possess universal value. Now that's what revelationary travel is all about.

Seabourn offers worldwide destinations for 2016, from the Mediterranean, Greek Isles and Baltic cities to the Caribbean & Panama Canal, Asia, Australasia and even the white continent of Antarctica. To find out more call 0843 373 2000 to request a brochure, or visit seabourn.co.uk



### JANUARZ

Why not start the year as you mean to go on: exploring some of the planet's most remote and dramatic shores. For just a few fleeting weeks each year, during the Austral summer, over 5,000 acres of sea ice melts in the Antarctic Circle, making it the only time the waters are navigable by ship. Sailing in January 2016, your 16-day adventure starts with a night in Buenos Aires before you fly to Ushuaia, the southernmost tip of Argentina, where the Andes meet the Southern Ocean, to board the expedition ship MS Fram. From here you'll navigate the notoriously treacherous Drake Passage (cross fingers for Drake Lake rather than Drake Shake), learning about Antarctica's extraordinary wildlife and history from the expedition team as you sail. With a full week to discover this pristine Antarctic

environment there'll be kayak trips to bond with penguins and seals, snowshoeing expeditions across the great white desert and even the chance to sleep ashore in a tent. You'll fall under the spell of the South Shetland Islands, marvel at the icebergs that clog the narrow Errera Channel and spot Minke whales in Neko Harbour. hurtigruten.co.uk; 0844 448 7601



### CRUISE CAPSULE



1 COACH NATURAL LEATHER DRIFTER BAG, £425, UK.COACH. COM 2. BALENCIAGA SUNGLASSES, £204, HARVEYNICHOLS.COM 3. MARY KATRANTZOU FENMORE PRINTED COTTON SHIRT AT HARVEY NICHOLS, £760, HARVEYNICHOLS. COM 4. STELLA MCCARTNEY CORNELIA MONOCHROME FLAT FORMS, £500, HARVEYNICHOLS.COM 5. THEORY TESTRA STRETCH-WOOL STRAIGHT-LEG PANTS, £235, NFT-A-PORTER.COM

its old school glamour and beautiful cabins, the first ever Pinnacle class MS Koningsdam is poised to up the ante. There'll be 14 new Signature suites, each a whopping 400 square feet with a veranda, fresh flowers and personalised stationery, specially designed family staterooms, which sleep up to five guests with two bathrooms, plenty of single cabins and even spa bunny staterooms (complete with yoga mats) close to the Greenhouse Spa & Salon. To top it off, MS Koningsdam will make her week-





**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE** LEFT: SEE THE AURORA WITH THE HURTIGRUTEN; CHOCOLATE BREAD PLIDDING ON HOLLAND AMERICA LINE: DUBROVNIK IN CROATIA; BULGARI CHINA ON BOARD HOLLAND **AMFRICA** 

### **FEBRUARY**

Joining a maiden voyage always makes for a thrilling ride, with bags of pomp and circumstance, but the launch of Holland America Line's 2,650-guest MS Koningsdam in February 2016 promises to be truly unforgettable. Recognised within the industry for

long inaugural voyage, and a series of 'Premiere' sailings afterwards, close to home in the Mediterranean, sailing amidst great fanfare from Civitavecchia to call at Dubrovnik, Kérkira (Corfu), Katakolon (Olympia) and Naples. hollandamerica.co.uk; 0843 374 2300



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in-depth talks and Q&A sessions across a variety of subjects. But you won't find yourself all at sea: there will also be two full days to explore Bermuda, with the vibrant town of Hamilton as your base, and a day each on Madeira and Gibraltar. Expect to return home relaxed, bronzed and rejuvenated, as well as cleverer. **rssc.com**;

02380 682140

### MARCH

Why not kick-start your spring with an indulgent, fortnight-long cruise from Miami to Barcelona? If you're feeling impulsive, leap aboard this March or, if you'd rather savour the anticipation (and create a killer cruise wardrobe), wait for March 2016. Sailing aboard the all-suite, all-veranda and all-inclusive Regent Seven Seas Navigator, you'll have nine blissful days at sea to luxuriate aboard as you cross the Atlantic and cruise the Med. With one crew member to pamper every two guests, each of the Navigator's 700 passengers is guaranteed to be spoiled rotten. If you can drag yourself away from the Canyon Ranch spa, tempting duty free boutiques or your sun-drenched balcony, you'll find Smithsonian-approved lecturers and speakers aboard, on-hand to provide

### **APRIL**

Grab spring 2016 by the collar and give it a good shake with a remarkable voyage from Crystal Cruises next April. Over the course of 23 days you'll sail from Tokyo along Japan's eastern coast to Russia, cross the International Date Line before reaching Alaska and then





1. STOCKHOLM GRASS GREEN
RAINCOAT, £200, STUTTERHEIM.COM
2. INTERNATIONAL CARRY-ON BY
TUMI, £1,895, UK.TUMI.COM
3. LEATHER BRACELET, £90, THINKPOSITIVE.COM.UK 4. KIRK ORIGINALS
NOTORIOUS PACIFIC WITH CIRRUS
LENSES, £255, KIRKORIGINALS.COM
5. JAVIER WAXED SUEDE OLD DUST
DRIVING SHOE, £350, JIMMYCHOO.
COM 6. BRISTON CLUBMASTER MATTE
BLACK CHRONOGRAPH WATCH,
£235, HARVEYNICHOLS.COM



travel down America's west coast to San Francisco. It's set to be one of the most diverse itineraries of the year, taking in the cultural traditions of Japanese towns like Aomori and the prospector heritage of Juneau in Alaska as well as the natural spectacles of the Kamchatka Peninsula, surrounded by 68 active volcanoes, and Alaska's 'Emerald Isle', Kodiak Island. You'll find yourself at the feet of towering glaciers as you sail through Glacier Bay and past Hubbard Glacier and navigate the sheltered Inside Passage from Alaska to Canada. With only 10 days at sea, there'll barely be time to exhaust the facilities of the 1,080-passenger, virtually all-inclusive Crystal Serenity. In addition to a Creative Learning Institute®, she offers a vast spa, wine tastings and flamboyant evening shows, and a restaurant and sushi bar from the celebrated chef Nobu Matsuhisa. crystalcruises.co.uk;

020 7399 7601



CLOCKWISE FROM
ABOVE LEFT: GRAND
SUITE ON BOARD
REGENT SEVEN SEAS;
THE MENU AT CRYSTAL
CRUISES' SILK ROAD
RESTAURANT; NOBU
SUSHI AT SILK ROAD;
THE THEATRE ON BOARD
REGENT SEVEN SEAS;
THE NAVIGATOR AT SEA

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### MAZ

May 2015 will see cruisers quivering with excitement as river cruise specialist Viking Cruises launches its first ocean ship, Viking Star. So excited was the cruise world about this latest addition that Viking Star's inaugural voyage sold out before she was even built. So, as the saying goes, that ship has sailed. However, there's still availability on subsequent voyages as Viking Star retraces her inaugural voyage from Venice to Istanbul in November 2015. Alternatively, bag a cabin on a maiden voyage aboard Viking's second and third ocean vessels, Viking Sea and Viking Sky, due to launch next year following the exceptional demand for Viking Star. Like their big sister, they'll offer their 928 passengers bags of Scandi style, a restaurant lined with windows that open in balmy weather for al fresco dining, a tranquil Wintergarden, hip Aquavit bar and a Nordic spa complete with snow grotto. What we're most excited about, however,

is the glass-backed infinity pool that's cantilevered off the stern. Set against the backdrop of the Norwegian fjords or Stockholm archipelago and it's all rather scandilicious. vikingcruises. co.uk; 0800 298 9700

#### JUXE

The ship of choice of HRH the Queen, the 50-passenger Hebridean Princess is an unashamedly posh country house party on water. As she ushers her guests sedately around the ruggedly beautiful Scottish and Irish coast, onboard entertainment comes in the form of champagne by the inglenook fireplace, cocktail evenings hosted by lairds in castles and frog racing after black tie dinners. Days are spent going for windswept walks along the coast and around pristine lochs, visiting historic houses and lush gardens, and enjoying languorous afternoons fishing or cycling. June is the only month when conditions are right for the plucky Princess to sail to the remote island of

St Kilda, the westernmost outpost of Scotland's Outer Hebrides. The UK's only double UNESCO World Heritage Site, St Kilda was inhabited by seriously hardy islanders right up until 1930 the eerie ruins of their village remain intact today. Making two voyages to St Kilda, the Princess will also call at ports such as the Isle of Skye, Lewis, Rum and the uninhabited Shiant Isles, delivering a blend of rugged natural beauty and pretty towns. hebridean. co.uk; 01756 704 700











1 RERNADOTTE WATCH £195 LARSSONANDJENNINGS.COM 2. MELISSA ODABASH FRULEY BLUE BRODERIE ANGLAISE COVER-UP, £165. ODABASH.COM 3. MISSONI MARE GRECA GRANDE REVERSIBLE BIKINI, £280, HARVEYNICHOLS.COM 4. PALE GREEN HAVAIANAS, £22, HAVAIANAS-STORE.COM 5. SARA BATTAGLIA TERESA FRINGE SHOPPER IN WHITE, £718, HARVEYNICHOLS.COM











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laskan nature is beyond words. So how to describe the feeling of insignificance as giant slices of ice break from a glacier and crash with a thunderous roar into the sea below? How to capture the nerve-tingling sensation as a bald eagle glides above you, calling with its distinctive cry? How to put into prose the raw beauty of a soaring peak, bathed in sunshine and filling the sky — or the skipped heartbeat as you stand on a teak deck and watch huge black orca fins slicing through the water towards you? All the way across Alaska's 375 million acres, such heart-stopping scenes are simply part of the scenery as you sail, rail and walk among some of the most magnificent surroundings on earth.

Cruise through the scenic Inside Passage, floating serenely on a five-star ship — with their elegant lounges, sparkling crystal, fine china and gracious hospitality on the inside; and on the outside, vast emerald forests, spellbinding glaciers 'flowing' into the sea, frontier ports brimming with adventure, and teeming marine life — orcas, otters, sea lions, eagles and spirit bears .

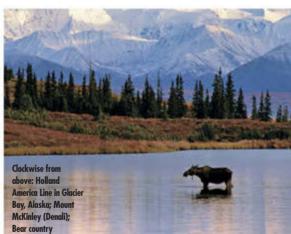
Settle in at a McKinley Wilderness Chalet lodge and explore Denali National Park – the largest protected ecosystem in the world, its untrammelled nature dominated by the soaring spectacle of Mount McKinley, North America's highest mountain.

As far from civilisation as you are ever likely to get, this tranquil place promises remote wilderness adventure (whether on foot, flight-seeing, hiking



trails or river-rafting), shared with only the 'locals' – grizzlies, caribou and moose.

Step aboard the luxurious glass-domed railcars of the McKinley Explorer and snake your way through glacier-carved valleys, across rugged river canyons and over extraordinary feats of railway engineering. Panoramic windows frame awe-inspiring backdrops to Alaskan-inspired dining; open-air viewing platforms ensure unadulterated views of the passing scenery. En route, tour the gold fields and heritage boardwalk towns of the Gold Rush era at Dawson City, Fairbanks and Whitehorse; explore the wilderness-edge city of Anchorage; glide along the Yukon River on an authentic paddle-wheeler; learn about native Indian culture - or savour the Spa resort of Alyeska, nestled in the Chugach mountain range. Whichever way you look at it, a journey through Alaska will make the wildest of dreams come true.



### READER OFFER

Experts in Alaskan travel for over 68 years, Holland America Line operates a series of Land+Sea journeys from May to September that showcase Alaska's highlights. A 12-night Land+Sea journey, featuring three nights in Denali National Park at a McKinley Wilderness Chalet lodge; a night in Anchorage; a seven-night Glacier Discovery Cruise from Seward to Vancouver with a full day at the UNESCO heritage site Glacier Bay National Park; and flights from London, starts from £2,349pp. To order an Alaskan Journeys brochure, please call 0843 374 2301





#### JULY

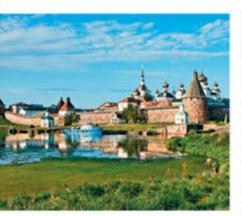
Bathed in midnight sun and shimmering beneath the swirling Northern Lights, July is the best time of year to appreciate the wonders of Scandinavia and Russia's White Sea. And there are few better ways to discover these far-flung corners of the world than from the comfort of Oceania Cruises' 684-passenger, country club casual ship Nautica. Sailing from the cosmopolitan city of Copenhagen, Nautica will call at Bergen, where you can take a scenic fjord cruise, before

visiting the charming Norwegian towns of Ålesund, Trondheim and Hammerfest. Your first taste of Russia will come at the historic port city of Murmansk from where Nautica will cruise the White Sea to spend two days exploring the Solovetsky Islands, just 100 miles below the Arctic Circle. Your last Russian stop will be Archangel, the chief seaport of medieval Russia, from where you cross the Barents Sea for Norway's dramatic North Cape and the stupendous fjords of Geiranger before continuing through pretty Aalborg and Lysekil (Sweden) before reaching Oslo. oceaniacruises.com; 0845 505 1920

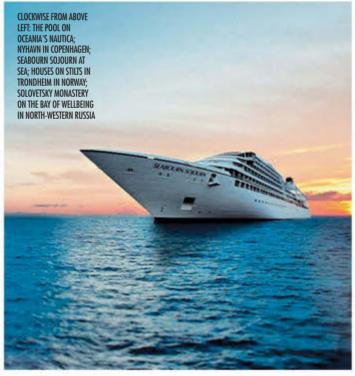
# AUGUST

As one of the very first companies to introduce the concept of ultraluxury cruising, Seabourn knows a thing or two about making its guests comfortable. Its trio of 450-passenger, definitively six-star ships - Odyssey, Sojourn and Quest – offer palatial cabins with private balconies, the largest spas of any ultra-luxury cruise line, and some of the finest cuisine at sea. It seems only appropriate that a ship like Seabourn Sojourn, with so many of the hallmarks of a private yacht, should offer a classic French Riviera summer itinerary: the week-long Yachtman's Mediterranean. Sailing from Monte Carlo, Sojourn's diminutive size enables her to access the Med's lesser-known gems: Bonifacio, Le Lavandou, Palamos, Sête, Antibes and Portovenere. Combine these idyllic ports with signature Seabourn experiences like foraging for delicacies in local markets with the ship's chef and Marina Days, when the sports deck is lowered for waterskiing, sailing and snorkelling in secluded bays, this is the Mediterranean at its very best. seabourn.com; 0845 070 0500











1. ORANGE RUST VENTILE MAC, £575, AND 2. 16.5 OUNCE KULSAN JEAN. £190. BOTH HARRYSTEDMAN.COM 3. DEARHAM BELT, £15, AND 4. HAYTON OVERNIGHTER BAG, £100, BOTH HENRILLOYD.COM 5. SHORT SLEEVE VINTAGE STRIPE BUTTON-DOWN SHIRT, £145, HARRYSTEDMAN.COM



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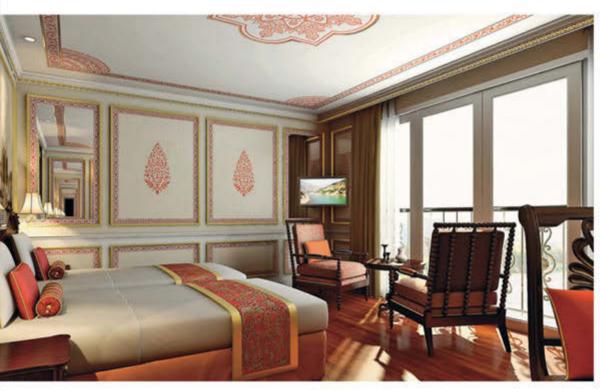
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It's hard to beat Silversea for unadulterated, all-frills luxury. And it's impossible to question the benefits of sailing aboard the 382-passenger Silver Whisper, which offers all the facilities of a mid-sized ship - a spa, gym and beauty salon, theatre, boutiques and casino as well as multiple pools, dining venues and bars - with the sophistication and intimacy of a small ship. With some of the cruise world's best service and absolutely everything included, from champagne on tap and golf pro lessons to shore excursions and tips for your butler, Silversea prides itself on providing its mollycoddled guests with a seamless holiday. But why take our word for it? Try it yourself this September as you admire the spectacular autumn foliage of Canada and New England: embarking Silver Whisper in Montreal, she'll wend her way along the coast to New York City over 10 days. Calling first at Quebec, you'll sail along the scenic Saguenay River, exploring the

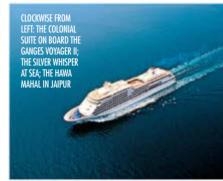


quintessentially Canadian coastal towns of Baie-Comeau and Gaspé before reaching Halifax in Nova Scotia. Pressing further south, you'll stop at Portland and Boston before passing through the Cape Cod Canal to Newport and eventually reaching the Big Apple. silversea.com; 0844 770 9030

### OCTOBER

Get your credit card out: bookings

open this month for the hotly anticipated new ship from boutique cruise line Uniworld: Ganges Voyager II. When she launches on the Ganges in January 2016, Ganges Voyager II will deliver a whole new level of comfort to cruising along the beguiling and exotic waters of India. Sleeping just 56 passengers, each of her spacious suites will offer French balconies and all the comforts of a five-star hotel. The ship's décor is elegant and unashamedly colonial with ornately carved four poster beds, heavy silk throws and intricate Kashmiri carpets. Whether you go the full monty with the 400 sq ft Maharaja Suite or stick with a smaller suite, you're guaranteed a sumptuous journey through the heart of India. The 12-night adventure combines a week aboard Ganges Voyager II with a five-night land tour, starting in Delhi and ending in Kolkata. Along the way you'll visit the Taj Mahal, Rajasthan's regal Pink City of Jaipur, beautifully preserved temple complexes,



artisanal workshops, centuriesold bazaars, and grand Victorian buildings and monuments from India's British and French colonial history.

uniworldrivercruises.co.uk; 0845 6788 558



1. CHRONOMETERWERKE IN
STAINLESS STEEL / SILVER-PLATED
DIAL WITH 3 ARABIC NUMERALS
£3,915, WEMPE.COM 2. LIMITED
EDITION ROSE GOLD PLATED GLOBE
CUFFLINKS £360,TATEOSSIAN.COM
3.KIRK ORIGINALS NOTORIOUS
£255, KIRKORIGINALS.COM 4.ORANGE
MOCCASINS £165, CARLOPAZOLINI.
COM 5. CANDY STRIPE SCARF,
£79, JOHNSTONSCASHMERE.
COM 6. BUSINESS TOTE, £199,
CHAPMANBAGS.COM



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# RAISE A GLASS TO NEW HORIZONS

How do you stand out from the crowd on the rivers of Europe?

By building the newest ships, it didn't take us long to get recognised for our efforts in river cruise innovation. Compared to others on the water, our stylish fleet of modern 'Star-Ships' cut a pretty sleek and contemporary figure. Custom-built to bring the highlights of ocean cruising to the intimacy of the river, guests on-board will enjoy the same levels of comfort and indulgence that you'd expect to find in a boutique hotel – but the views, destination and experiences change daily.

Step on-board and experience the future of river cruising with Emerald Waterways.



To request a copy of our river cruise brochure call free on **0808 102 1770** visit www.emeraldwaterways.co.uk or see your local cruise agent visit www.emeraldwaterways.co.uk or see















### **XOVEMBER**

Banish the winter blues and follow one of Celebrity Cruises' most popular ships, Constellation (aka Connie to fans), to Abu Dhabi in November 2016. Based out of the vibrant UAE capital until January 2017, the 2,034-passenger Constellation will explore intriguing Arabian destinations such as the shopper's paradise of Dubai and the ancient Omani city of Muscat as well as Mangalore, Goa and Mumbai on India's western coast. Plump for one of Celebrity's nine-night 'Arabian Immersion' voyages and you'll get two days in Abu Dhabi and Muscat as well as three days in Dubai, enabling you to truly get under the skin of these fascinating cities. With a full day at sea, you can also get to know Connie, a ship that combines impressive service and a surprisingly intimate feel with mega-ship facilities: seven dining venues, including the

brand new exclusively Suite Class Luminae restaurant: 10 bars and lounges; a casino; Vegas-style evening entertainment; and a 25,000 squarefoot Canyon Ranch Spa complete with a thalassotherapy pool, hot tubs, a spa café, thermal suite, hair and beauty salon and a gym. celebritycruises. co.uk; 0845 456 0523

### **DECEMBER**

This Christmas, you can combine traditional festivities with Caribbean sunshine on a 19-day Christmas & New Year voyage aboard Cunard's magnificent ocean liner, Queen Mary 2. Pack all the heels, sequins and Christmas gifts you desire as you sail from Southampton on December 15. With six days at sea crossing the Atlantic, there's time to switch off and enjoy OM2's spa. lectures, restaurants, afternoon teas and evening entertainment. Longer than three football fields with the industry's highest passenger to space ratio, you might share QM2 with 2,600 passengers but will find plenty of peaceful spots to read, chat and lose yourself to the endless sea vistas. Do any last minute Christmas shopping in New York before enjoying lavish Christmas Day festivities onboard and 'recuperating' on Boxing Day on the Caribbean island of St Thomas. The white sands of St Kitts, St Lucia, St Maarten and Tortola all beckon before seeing in the New Year aboard QM2 to incomparable razzmatazz. Returning to New York on January 3, there'll be time for some bonus sales shopping before flying back home. cunard.co.uk;



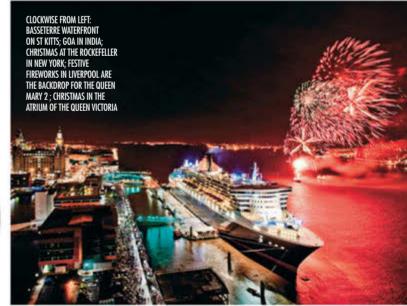


£195. WFARFHANDSOMF.COM 2. BLOCK CHECK YELLOW/ RED/ORANGE SCARF, £59 JOHNSTONS CASHMERE. COM 3. PANDORA WEDGE, CORAL £45, HOLSTERAUSTRALIA.CO.UK 4. LILAC / LIME TOTE BAG £425. CARLOPAZOLINI.COM 5 MY HEARTS SPINS BRACFIET ROSE

GOLD, £104, OAKJEWELLERY.COM

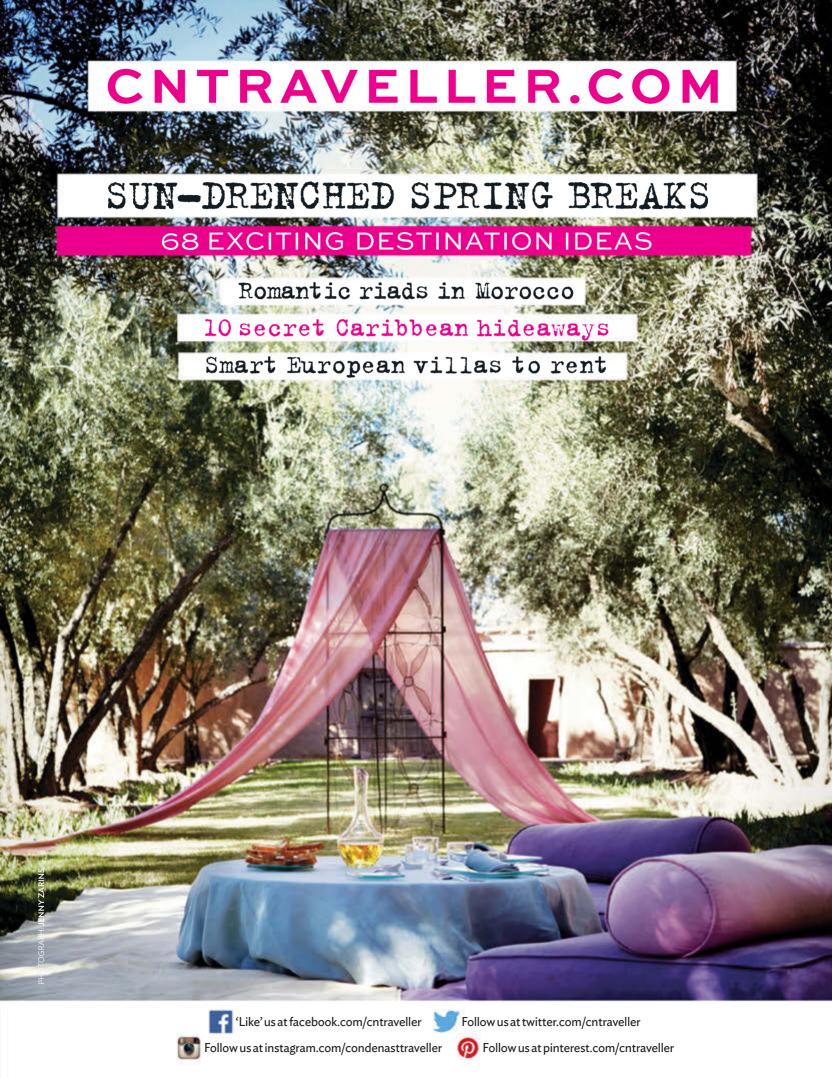








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We think we may have just stumbled across the most fabulous gift to give the person who has everything; a **Champagne Laurent-Perrier** Cuvée Rosé birdcage gift set which includes this super fun box, a bottle of the pink stuff and a chic birdcage-inspired bottle stopper. Where do we sign up? **£69.99**, corksout.com





Who says you don't need a knit outside of winter? With British weather as temperamental as it is, style out the chill in spring with this fun fine knit jumper wis Buster Le Fauve print, designed by artist Gary Baseman for Coach. £645, uk.coach.com

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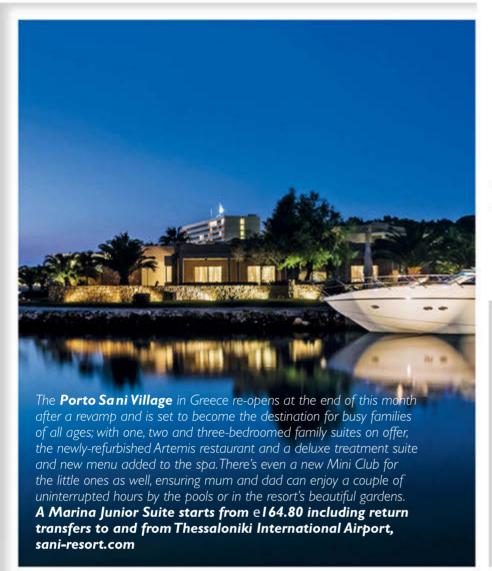


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Indulge yourself with the new Honeysuckle & White Tea Collection by Molton Brown. Featuring zesty top notes of mandarin with warm sandalwood, we're already converts to the Bath & Shower Gel that has infused our mornings with some much-needed tranquility. £18, moltonbrown.com

# Traveller

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Traveller

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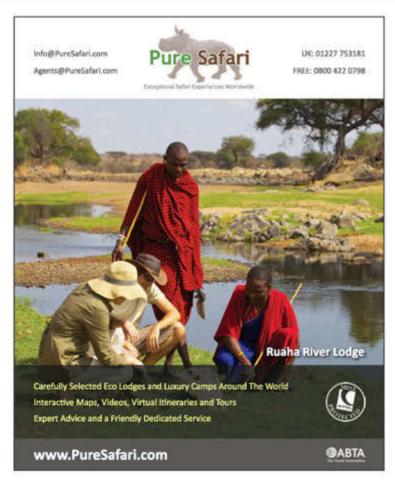
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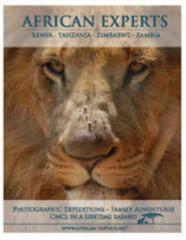
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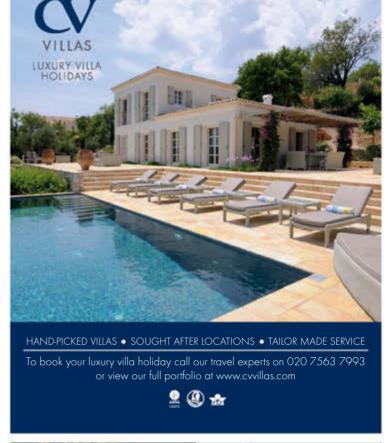
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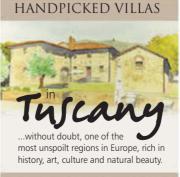
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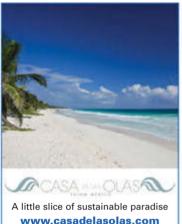


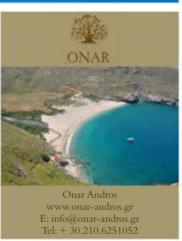
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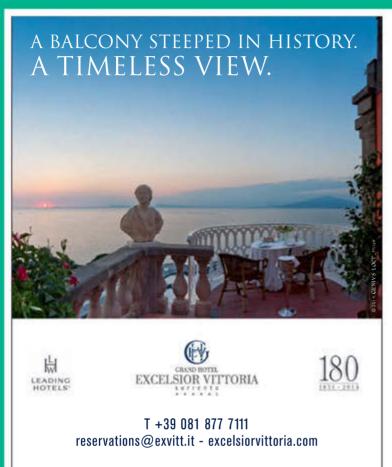
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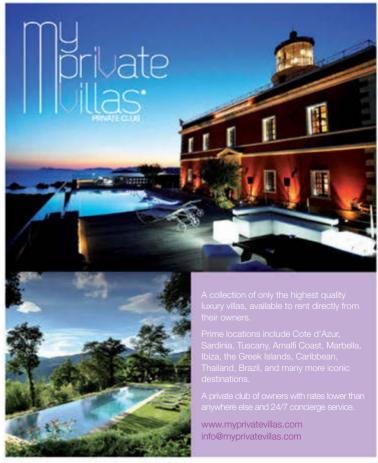
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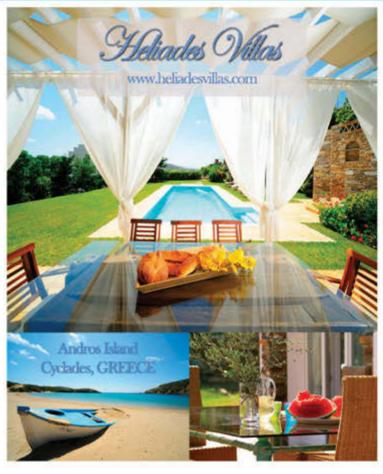
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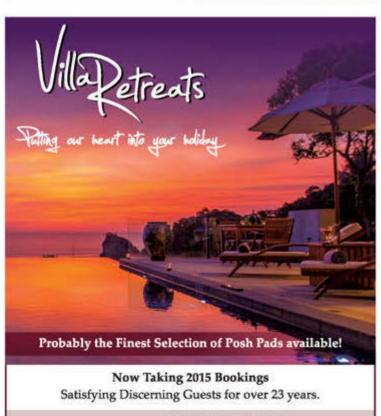
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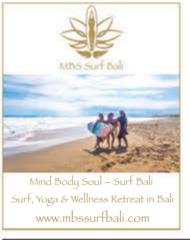


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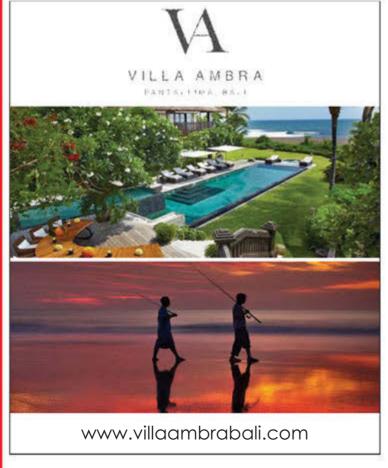
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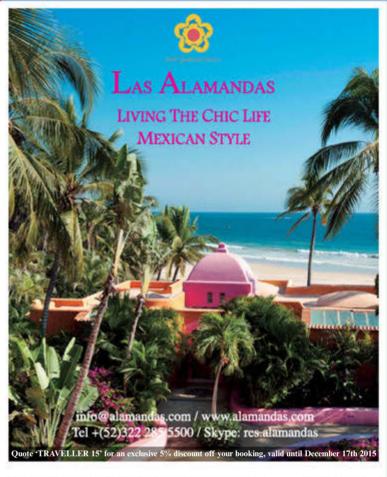
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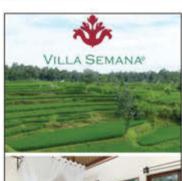
# On The Move... To Bali

# On The Move...

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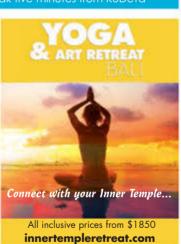


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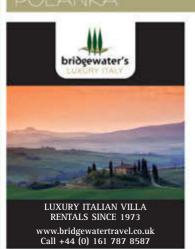
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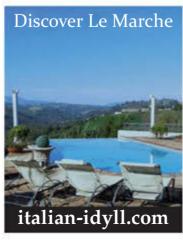
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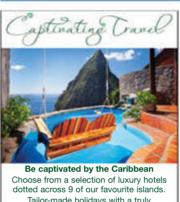






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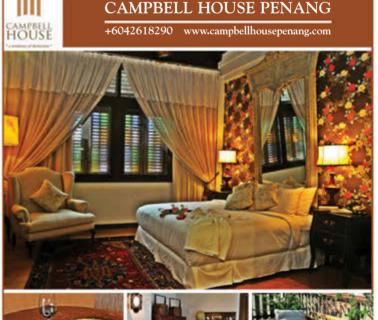






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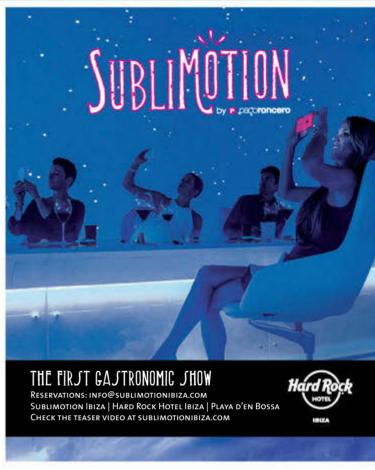


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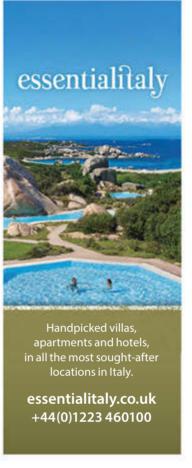
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# VIEW WITH A ROOM

### WHERE ARE WE? VILLA ALKHOZAMA, MARRAKECH

WHY WE LOVE IT Pretty much every fashion magazine, model, stylist and editor in the world has done a shoot here. And if they haven't done a shoot here, then they've stayed here. And fallen in love with its hedonistic ways. It makes everyone dream of building their own Edenic retreat hidden away from the donkey-din of Marrakech in the cool Palmeraie, where fantastical visions seem to become real bricks and mortar. But the Ezzahra estate would be hard to beat. Beautiful green lawns stretch away towards a twinkling pool under the electric Kool-Aid purple blooms of jacaranda trees. There is badminton to be played, tortoises to chase, a huge Berber tent in the garden like a pleasure dome of forbidden nights, and shisha pipes and cocktails with mint that tickles your nose. Whatever the plan was here, they've nailed it. Outside fireplaces, masseurs on hand all day, every day, huge and wonderful rooms with baths that grow out of the wall like wishing wells. Although the main house has been up and running for more than a decade, the estate now grows, thrillingly, to include new, independent properties like this one, Villa Alkhozama, which has two bedrooms and its own stand-alone hammam. It is gorgeously done, and imaginative too, so that there's lots of slinking into this cool pool from the daybed in the heat of summer. Sleep here, if the night is tender, under the blast of a starry sky; nothing but birdsong will wake you in the morning. Go small or beautiful and take this house alone, or max out full-throttle and nab the whole lot for the best party ever. The staff here are such fun, so engaging and so delightful that everything appears, deliciously, in seconds. Plus, they've seen it all before. MELINDA STEVENS

Villa Alkhozama, four guests for two nights, £3,200. Ezzahra, 14 guests for seven nights, £28,900. Both prices include everything except wine. +212 661 221714; www.ezzahra-morocco.com







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